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ABSTRACT

This guide book, the result of several years' work with Indian young people, offers suggestions and ideas based on the principle that a student's writing improves in direct proportion to the amount of writing he does. To supply enthusiastic motivation is the first essential of all English teaching. Writing can best begin from individual personal experience rather than from the abstraction of an exercise to be corrected. Even students with the most mediocre natural gifts may be encouraged to write better than they otherwise would. The effectiveness of the method described in this guide is that it "makes the Indian or Eskimo student recognize that English can be a vehicle for a much broader area of his experience than he has permitted it to embrace so far." Suggestions for motivating individual student interest, topic selection, writing and rewriting practices are discussed by Terry Allen in the light of her lifetime of work in American Indian education. The foreword and sections on teaching and writing poetry, by John Povey, are based on his years of interest in discovering African authors and encouraging them to use the English language as a medium of creative expression. (AMM)

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WRITING TO CREATE OURSELVES

A Manual for
Teachers of English and Creative Writing
in
Bureau of Indian Affairs Secondary Schools

INDIAN EDUCATION

by

T. D. Allen

with

Foreword and Chapters on Poetry

by

John Povey

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United States Bureau of Indian Affairs
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Manual for teachers of English and Creative Writing
in
Bureau of Indian Affairs Secondary Schools

Prepared for experimental use and testing as a part of the Creative Writing Project provided through the Division of Curriculum Development and Review.

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CONTENTS

	Preface	i
	About the Authors	ii-iii
	Foreword	iv-xvi
I	Why Write:	1
II	Five Doors	8
III	Here & Now	21
IV	What Shall I Write?	37
V	Now That You Have A Manuscript	47
VI	The Raw Material of the Writing Business	70
VII	The Teaching of Poetry	80
VIII	The Writing of Poetry	90
IX	Building Blocks for Prose Writing	97
X	Before You Start to Write a Story	119
XI	Teacher Exchange	129
XII	Capsule Lessons in Writing	149

PREFACE

The Creative Writing Project which this Bulletin describes represents Indian education at its best. It offers the Indian high school student an opportunity for a highly successful school experience as it capitalizes on one of his unique strengths, his own life as an American Indian in the twentieth century. Terry Allen, Project Director, describes it much more adequately when she says in her instructions to teachers:

> The very fact of Indianness provides our students with the raw material of experiences that are unique and, therefore, of interest to the general reader . . . These young men and women are authorities on twelve to twenty years of living. They deserve an attentive, respectful listener to whatever they have to say in the range of their experience.

In this day and age of personal and cultural alienation Terry Allen and John Povey are achieving the difficult educational goal of relevancy in the curriculum. They make the complex task of cross-cultural understanding assume a practical school configuration by using the artistic form of creative writing. Art, with its depth of feeling and its companion aspect of human freedom, is perhaps the most viable mechanism at man's command that can deal honestly and humanely with the basic issues of being a modern day American Indian. What this project does is to strip the traditional school writing experience of all its pedantic shackles and free the student to describe his feelings, his thoughts. The results invariably echo the ageless and indomitable human quality so frequently recorded and rapidly forgotten in American history — the dignified and compassionate spirit of the American Indian.

Charles N. Zellers	Tom R. Hopkins
Assistant Commissioner, Education	Chief, Curriculum Division

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

By training, experience, and temperament, T. D. Allen and Professor John Povey are eminently qualified to render professional help in the field of writing and to work personally with Indian students and their teachers.

Mrs. Allen is the distinguished, best-selling author (in collaboration with her late husband) of such widely read and respected books as DOCTOR IN BUCKSKIN (Harpers), and NAVAHOS HAVE FIVE FINGERS, a volume in the scholarly "Civilization of the American Indian Series" of the University of Oklahoma Press. These and many others of their books have for years been included, for their historical accuracy and honest characterizations of American Indians, on study and reading lists of high schools and colleges throughout the country. T. D. Allen notes, manuscripts, proofs, scripts, films, etc. are being collected by the University of Oregon Library.

Mrs. Allen is included in WHO'S WHO OF AMERICAN WOMEN, WHO'S WHO IN THE WEST, CONTEMPORARY AUTHORS, the INTERNATIONAL DICTIONARY OF BIOGRAPHY, and THE DIRECTORY OF BRITISH AND AMERICAN WRITERS. She is a member of the Authors' League of America, Western Writers of America, TESOL, and the National Council of Teachers of English. Her list of alma maters includes Yale University, Columbia, University of Oklahoma, New York University, UCLA, Stanford, and others.

Born in Oklahoma, interested in the westward expansion of the nation, Mrs. Allen has lived among, studied, and written about Indians all her life. The untapped possibilities in Indian students challenged her in 1963 to leave free lance writing and establish the program in writing at the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe. During her five years of teaching there, she was able to help students hurdle second-language barriers and quickly emerge onto the pages of scholarly, educational, and trade publications. Many of her students are deriving some of their college expenses from their writings. She is now editing an anthology of their poetry soon to be published by Doubleday and Company.

While publication is one goal of Mrs. Allen's work, she never loses sight of the less tangible, more significant results accruing to Indian students from learning to express themselves in writing. Through writing, they discover and disclose themselves and thus become whole persons, contributors to society and to understanding among peoples.

To assist in offering a writing program to BIA secondary schools, Mrs. Allen selected John Povey, Ph. D., professor in the English Second Language Program at the University of California at Los Angeles and also director there of the Humanities Division of the African Studies Center.

For many years, Dr. Povey has worked toward the recognition and encouragement of second-language literatures in English and has published extensively in this field. He is editor of the quarterly, African Arts, and contributor to many scholarly journals and reviews. He is a working member of TESOL, the Modern Language Association of America, and the African Studies Association. His years of interest in discovering African authors and encouraging them to write in English have led him naturally and skillfully into working with American Indians.

Washington, D. C.
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Evelyn Bauer
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FOREWORD

Historically the basic language policy of American education has required the exclusive use of English in schools. This decision worked well enough with immigrants who, by coming to this country, demonstrated willingness to adjust their own national identities to the customs and language of their newly adopted country. They began to learn English urgently.

Other groups, particularly the Mexicans and American Indians, did not share this immigrant willingness to adapt at the cost of group cultural destruction. The English language was received by them even with some antagonism. The necessity to acquire English was felt to be only one part of a more formidable attack on local traditional ways. Yet for the Indian, the English language and the social changes that it permitted, became the requirement for any transition from the traditional though restrictive life on the reservations. Similarly for Mexicans, the English-medium schools were the only avenue for education and social mobility. For both these groups the legitimate suspicion remained that the English language was a vehicle of foreign penetration. The resulting sense of grievance led them to employ English only as a means to serve the commercially dominant American culture surrounding them. The mother tongue was kept for the expression of more intimate and individual feelings.

This attitude led to an impasse in many attempts to teach the non-English speaking groups in the country. Otherwise imaginative programs floundered on the issue of language. Yet the effort to teach English could not be avoided for its importance both nationally and practically was very obvious. Recently a more sensible and humane educational policy has been advanced. Education in the mother tongue is to be permitted. It is now a practice for education in some predominantly Mexican-American schools in California to be conducted at least partially in Spanish. In some places on the reservation schooling is begun in Navajo and materials are being developed for use in the teaching of native-tongue literacy in several Indian languages. Bilingualism, with all its vast social and educational implications, has now been accepted as basic educational policy.

This decision is an important step toward overcoming both the educational problems and the social grievances associated with language choice. It has not eliminated the practical difficulties which persist for students whose mother tongue is not English. There remains the professional question of how best to accomplish that later move into second language fluency when the mother tongue and its attitudes will have been reinforced in the elementary classroom. The problems are compounded by the lack of effective research directed at this level of language acquisition and manipulation.

At the earliest levels of elementary language study the linguists have been fairly effective in developing an educational technique for language learning. It is called the aural/oral system. The method stresses the primacy of oral language, and encourages extensive repetition of phrases and sentences modeled by the teacher. There has been much less success in developing an effective methodology for teaching the more complex levels of second language usage when the elements of reading and writing become more important than primary speech. Perhaps the greatest educational need for this stage of learning is to make the

English classes important by demonstrating their appropriateness and value. This will lend the motivation for student usage without which no language teaching can be successful.

A classroom technique that seems to be particularly effective at this more advanced level of language manipulation is the use of creative writing in the English classes. This is helpful provided the student can be convinced of the relevance of such writing to his own needs and experiences.

Creative writing can over-simply be defined as any writing that expresses the student's own thoughts and experiences as opposed to writing which allows him only to manipulate ideas and vocabulary supplied to him. The latter work might consist of exercises from a text on the development of the paragraph using given phrases or require the student to write a business letter where the style must follow a standardized model.

These mechanical exercises can have some formal value. After all, some students will be required to write formal commercial letters if they work in an office. Creative writing, however, is much more effective than other writing tasks for the student's education for it insists on more than manipulative skills. Because it requires a student's active intellectual involvement, its results spread widely outside the English language classroom. There is a general improvement in the essential skills of expression, a more imaginative approach to many tasks, and a greater confidence which derives from the individual assurance that writing often imparts.

This guide book is the result of several years' work with Indian young people. The success achieved in so many cases has led to this attempt to encourage other teachers to experiment with this method of teaching English writing. Many suggestions and ideas are offered in this guide, but most of them are based on the accepted principle that a student's writing improves in direct proportion to the amount of writing he does. That amount will be decided by the urgency of the motivation that he brings to his work. Fundamentally then, to supply enthusiastic motivation is the first essential of all English teaching.

The kind of emphasis that this guide suggests a teacher apply to the writing class does supply a good deal of motivation. Encouragement can become a stimulus to practical and tangible improvement, precisely because this skill acquisition is not set up as the essential first aim; an essential technique that has been found to be self-defeating. We should begin, as does all effective education, from the student himself, leading him progressively from the known to the unknown. Writing can best begin from individual personal experience and not from the abstraction of an exercise to be corrected in the unproven expectation of grammatical improvement. The effective use of the life story is described later in detail and it is obvious that the self-expression it permits is a most effective device, especially in BIA schools. For too long the "Indian" element has been played down and English language study has been seen only in its relationship with the external majority culture.

The best style, at least in contemporary terms, is one that most effectively conveys the writer's meaning. A student whose composition is returned with errors corrected on the grounds, "We don't say it that way," or "The grammar books say this is wrong," is gaining the minimal motivation towards improvement. Corrections urged on the lines of "I think you are saying something interesting here, but you haven't made it quite clear to me" raise quite different energies in the student.

These remarks suggest the importance of what the student says and, therefore, of himself as a person. They also supply the only logical reason for any change in writing technique — the necessity to be intelligible. Writing, in the final analysis, exists only to convey its meaning effectively to a reader.

The willingness to rework a piece for this reason does often require the student to make just those very revisions that would in fact be demanded as conventional grammatical corrections. Since an English teacher is concerned with obtaining the desirable final end of writing improvement, she should recognize that it is deleterious to set up overly rigid standards of correctness to begin with. Correctness is of course a terminal aim, but it can be approached indirectly. Vehement criticism of errors in writing technicalities kills the writing urge. It is out of the practice and usage stimulated by the desire to communicate that improvement comes.

The importance of this discovery lies in its applicability to a wide range of student levels and skills. In other words one is not merely setting up a program that will develop new writers, even though that might be a happy result in some cases where there is marked individual aptitude. The method is simultaneously a device that encourages even students with the most mediocre natural gifts to write better than they otherwise would.

The effectiveness of this method is that it makes the Indian or Eskimo student recognize that English can be a vehicle for a much broader area of his experience than he has permitted it to embrace so far. It can express all his most intense and individual thoughts. In fact it is often very helpful to indicate even at this stage, just how widespread is this literary use of English in the international context. Short stories and poems read in class could be taken from Asian Indian and African collections which are readily obtainable. They should prove to have a special relevance to the American Indian student. They demonstrate the effective way that other "foreign" groups have used English as the language of their creativity and the means by which they can express their culture to the outside reader. In those foreign countries they clearly do not feel that they forfeit their traditional cultures as they employ this imported foreign language medium.

This kind of creative writing uses the English language to communicate the more significant elements of the individual writer's personal experience. In bulk these works become an assertion of the most vital elements of the group or tribal experience. English is flexible enough that it can carry the expression of cultures other than the British/ American one and this must be encouraged. The literary statement of a culture foreign to the English language comes not merely in repetitions of "tales my grandmother taught me" or in local animal legends. It may even be that these tales have less present life than we imagine. Still, the expression of universal feelings of love, devotion, sorrow and doubt are vitally alive. These take on a rich and distinctive flavor when they are described by a member of a formerly silent culture group in terms of his own beliefs and values.

Cultural beliefs which surround shared fears and concerns about death, for example, vary across the world. Experience is the true basis for group cultural identification, not geography, nor the language of the telling. This makes one realize how, even at the very elementary level of writing skill an attempt at creative writing begins to bolster the sense of cultural identity by requiring examination of the individual experience. By deliberately fostering the awareness of the uniqueness of the self, it develops a pride in being Indian. This is found, not in that too superficial identification through "Indian folk tales," but in the discovery that personal differences permit fresh and exciting awarenesses which are to be encouraged as valuable and worthwhile. Such a discovery naturally affects the personality and serves a most vital social purpose. It also contradicts the inaccurate assumption that BIA education is aimed at destroying rather than reinforcing the original racial identity.

A student's re-discovered self-esteem may hopefully spill into other elements of school activities. The reinforcement of a sense of Indianness may appear on the surface to be separatist. It is in fact the basis for that personal reassurance that will permit a more willing integration. There will be much less reason for the common fear that working and living together can only be accomplished by the total abdication of individuality in merging with the uniform American world.

There is also a very significant literary element that will result from the intelligent encouragement of creative writing: the building up of a new literature. Although there would be little educational justification for the use of creative writing if it were applicable only to the education of an elite, there are such degrees of giftedness and skill that it seems likely that professional level writers will arise from these classes. In fact one of the most impressive supports for this program is the high, publishable level of writing already achieved by the young Indian students in all forms of writing. Collections and anthologies have already been made. Such material will have an important effect in the classroom. Publication will inspire other such writing. It may also supply the texts for further English study.

The problem of developing a literature syllabus that is of concern and relevance to the Indian student is acknowledged. The addition of "western" material to the accepted classical New England stories has not proved very successful. Tales from the frontier are particularly odious for the despicable portrait they draw of the Indian who is seen always as a vicious liability preventing the destined westward movement of the land-seeking whites. There is precedent for believing that a local literature is immensely stimulating to reading. Those who have taught in Africa have found a great enthusiasm in student response when contemporary

African literary material is used in the classroom. Study is made easier because the student has a far greater familiarity with the social and geographical background of such writing than with Wordsworth's Lake District or Hawthorne's Eastern Seaboard. Such reading also inspires a particular pride and approval from the sense of cultural identification it presupposes.

The African situation differs from the American Indian one. On that continent they are forging an explicit nationality. This is not the aim in Indian education. Nevertheless a similar attitude can be valuable. I look forward to the far greater internationalizing of the literary syllabus of all American schools. The parochial limitation of many present assumptions will be destroyed when it is no longer supposed that English belongs to Britain and the States but has become an international vehicle; the likely precursor to its ultimate use as a world language.

But this discovery is especially important in the BIA schools where too often by accident or implicit decision, the superiority of the dominant American culture has been exclusively taught. The reading of material written by Indians in English classes will valuably declare the truth that literature is the expression of the total human spirit.

What then begins as a teaching device to foster improved English writing takes on immensely significant overtones for the cultural and educational development of young Indians. This should not perhaps surprise us; after all, literature is the most wide-ranging and significant of all the arts of man. It suggests the encouraging fact that from apparently humble and minor beginnings in the classroom of the individual teacher, significant educational and social changes can be effected. It is surely the major aim of all teachers to achieve these. The guide that follows, although it offers only suggestions and hints to be modified and developed by the teacher's own rich personal experience in the classroom is perhaps a useful indication of the direction that might be taken and indicates the exciting results it seems likely to achieve.

UCLA
November, 1969

John Povey

I

WHY WRITE?

Blank paper, pens, pencils, personalities, pet peeves, penchants -- these are the stuff of writing, all so common and everyday that almost everyone believes he learned to write in the first grade. Yet writing, in printed form, is often looked upon by Indians and Eskimos with a certain kind of suspicion. They have been written about for hundreds of years and much of this writing has presented a false picture and an adverse point of view. With good reason, our First Americans could write to correct the record.

A better reason for our students to write and to learn the art of writing (not merely its mechanics) is that, as someone has said, "Any work of writing confers its first benefit upon its author."

A student, writing what he wants to write, is creating his personality. He is discovering who he is and what it is he has to say. He is learning to look at the conflicts within him and to sort them out in relation to the requirements of living with others. He is examining and setting goals for himself. He is learning to think in a straight line. He is developing a discipline. He is finding within himself legitimate sources of dignity and pride.

He can never again be put down, nor can he put himself down, as "just an Indian." He knows better. He has actually seen glimpses of greatness from within himself through his pen. He has read thoughts bigger than he thought himself capable of producing. There they are, in permanent form on the paper before him and he wrote them.

In this then lies our first reason for teaching our students to write and also our first criterion for judging the worth of what they write. A piece of writing is valuable if it -- or the effort a student has put into it -- serves to improve its author as a human being. This does not mean that our standards for grammar and rhetoric need be low. Quite the contrary.

We expect and inevitably get improved facility in English usage. If that were the only end product, it would be well worth our effort. In order to participate in a creative writing program, students must spend long hours and years in practicing the use of English. We all need this kind of practice but, for those for whom English is a second language, such practice is invaluable. In addition, however, experience has led us to expect more.

The end product of this program can be publishable stories, poems, articles, and books. We have many examples, published by educational and trade publishers, after only the briefest and spottiest training in creative writing offered in BIA schools. Eventually, the end may be an indiginous American literature. Whatever the end, it is the lapse time spent in writing and the developing human processes going on during that time that are more significant than any tangible printed page.

We, as teachers, are concerned with unfolding, evolving persons, and writing can be one of our most effective tools. In addition, we can and should expect some highly desirable by-products -- poems, stories, plays, essays, books. Along the way to these by-products, students will inevitably read more, practice standard English usage more, and grow and flower as persons.

WHAT IS IT POSSIBLE FOR US TO TEACH?

We must work on a margin of time. Many of our students use English as a somewhat halting second language. Most fall low on the scales of reading ability. Grammar and rhetoric training have, as a rule, been sketchy or grossly neglected in the grade schools our students attended. Most of us have been trained as English teachers, not as professional writers or as writing coaches. (We do, fortunately, have some teachers with a good deal of training and experience in writing. This is a happy plus, but certainly not a requirement for success in this program.) Given all these conditions, what exactly can we teach students that will help them to write well?

Writing with imagination and flair is both an art and a craft. We certainly cannot expect all of our students to become masters of the art of writing any more than we can expect all students equipped with a chisel to become fine sculptors. Some few individuals do seem to be born with a kind of writer's sixth sense. Some of these are to be found among Indians and Eskimos. Even they, however, need to learn the craft and the disciplines of writing and these can be taught and developed by practice. For the most part, writers are trained technicians who, in addition, develop the art of writing by lengthy trial-and-error practice. We can teach many of the techniques of the craft of writing.

We can help you the teacher, in the first place, start students on writing as an art. Conversely, we can help you know how not to stop them from writing. Stopping students is not an exclusive skill of teachers. Many of your study materials and course plans, without intending to, provide excellent ways of stopping students from writing. We can help you safeguard some of the effective methods and replace the ineffective with more productive experiments and exercises.

We can show you ways to make students aware of the world, of other human beings, and of relationships between things and people. Once a student has stepped out into this kind of turning-on, he has material from which he can write. Usually, he has material from which he is eager to write.

We can give you finger exercises that will get a student into habits of observing closely and recording in detail through his personal sense perceptions.

We can provide exercises and games that will help students to enlarge their vocabularies and, more important for writing, guide them in the choice of words for their denotation and/or their connotation, their specific and intended imagery, and for their excitement and fun.

We can stimulate students to read and make them aware of the techniques used by accomplished writers so that, as they read, they are always exploring a textbook in writing.

We can help students develop appreciation for and skill in the use of telling figures of speech.

We can acquaint them with interest-getting devices, with tricks of word selection, tense and voice forms, sequence, suspense, etc. that give a piece of writing readability.

We can make them familiar with various poetic forms and guide them in the selection of the best form for whatever they have to say.

We can give them in direct, outline form ways to develop a short story, either a formal or a familiar essay, a character story, and even certain kinds of poems.

We can learn ourselves how to recognize sparks among the ashes on a page and discover ways to fan these sparks into flame rather than put them out under a wet blanket of grammar rules.

Finally, we can provide students themselves with a checklist of rules for readable writing and show them how to become their own critics. Every writer must learn this because, ultimately, he is his own editor, his own judge, his own teacher.

II

FIVE DOORS

"What We're Learning about Learning" is the title of an article that appeared in the New York Times recently. It reports that child study experts have discovered that tiny babies understand only in terms of what they can see, hear, touch, taste, and smell. Even beginners in school cannot understand abstract explanations. They may repeat "1 and 1 are 2" but they cannot get the idea until they can touch a real orange and then are given another orange. Then, something clicks.

Most good writers could have added that we all get our information about the world through our eyes, ears, taste buds, nose, and fingertips or skin. Writers also know what the baby experts learned. Namely, "lack of stimulation can actually change what a child sees or hears." That is, children with all their senses who were raised by parents who could not hear lost their ability to hear well. Experiments kept monkeys in darkness for long periods as infants.

After that it was very difficult for them to learn to distinguish objects by sight even though their eyes were not damaged. For writers, beginning or established, this is a vital lesson.

The five senses are five doors through which enters all our information about the world, but these doors have a tendency to swing shut. The way to keep them open is to keep streams of information marching through, flooding through, so the doors don't have a chance to close.

The trouble is that we don't have to make an effort, such as putting infants or ourselves in dark places in order to impair our sight. We can accomplish the same result simply by forgetting to look at whatever is before our eyes. We turn our ears off and actually damage our hearing simply by not listening to the wind, to the birds, to the traffic, to a scolding voice. Sometimes this is deliberate and protective. More often, it is unconscious and careless.

WAYS TO TURN OURSELVES ON

It used to be considered "hip" to expand awareness by experimenting with drugs. This was reported as an effort to see colors, to hear voices, to feel to the utmost intensity.

For quite some time now, the leaders of the "turned-on" group are finding new and better methods for waking up their senses. They join "encounter groups" where they engage in non-chemical experiments for sharpening sight, sound, odor, taste, and feeling. The pity is that any of us ever lost our original awareness. A healthy baby is turned on every waking minute, keeping his eyes open, his ears tuned to every sound, his fingers reaching and his voice raised in protest when his skin is uncomfortably wet.

We all began life with this kind of awareness. In order to write well, we need to recapture our baby sense of wonder, curiosity, conscious observation of details. To do this, we don't need drugs nor an encounter group, but a few simple experiments and exercises will help get us back into the habit of seeing, tasting, smelling, hearing, and feeling.

Use with your classes whatever you have at hand as the stuff of numerous reawakening experiences — usually the most familiar material or object is the best. It is a little shocking to discover how much we don't know about the atmosphere in which we live, about the materials we handle every day. Often a bit of shock is all it takes to turn a dull, unresponsive student into an alive, outgoing poet.

Barney Mitchell entered writing class for the first time in an almost stuporous state. He had tried all the other arts offered him at the Institute of American Indian Arts, cared nothing for any of them, and was on the verge of giving up. Students were seated around a long table in the written arts studio. They were given a brief oral introduction to the five doors of sense awareness. Each was supplied with a sheet of paper and a pencil. Then the teacher tossed out above the table a handful of milkweed seed pods. Students were left to do whatever they wanted to about this.

They blew on the gliding seed pods at first to keep them afloat. Some swatted at them. Some examined them closely with their eyes only. Some started pulling off their wings. A few became adventurous enough to nibble on the seeds. Soon most were writing tentative notes. One or two were writing rapidly and fully.

"If you feel like writing, I would enjoy seeing your paper when you are ready for a reader," the teacher said.

The results were not great literature, but the results in some of the students were profound. They all learned, in the ten or twelve minutes required for telling them about the five doors and for personally examining the seed pods, a basic and vital lesson in writing.

Barney Mitchell tells about it in his book. "The long boring hours seemed short," he wrote. When he handed his paper to his teacher and she said, "Barney, you've written a poem," his delight and awe were almost too much for him to contain. He walked down the campus repeating to himself, "I wrote a poem. I wrote a poem. I wrote a poem."

Later, after his first draft had accidentally disappeared, he tried to recall how he first started writing. Bringing it all back in detail, as he often does and as most good writers do, (see There and Then, p.32) he reconstructed the moment, including the essence of his poem.

THE DRIFTING LONELY SEED

From the casein dark-blue sky,
    Through the emptiness of space,
A sailing wisp of cotton.
    Never have I been so thrilled!
The drifting lonely seed,
    Came past my barred window,
Whirling orbit, it landed before me,
    As though it were a woolly lamb --
Untouched, untamed, and alone --
    Walked atop my desk, stepping daintily.
Reaching forth my hands, I found you,
    Gentle, weightless, tantalizing.
I blew you out through barricaded window;
    You pranced, circled round me,
Sharing with me your airy freedom.*

* from *Miracle Hill: The Story of a Navaho Boy*, by Emerson Blackhorse Mitchell, and T. D. Allen. Copyright 1967 by the University of Oklahoma Press.

A sophomore student in Ann Gulledge's class was so impressed by the five-door idea that she wrote the project director a letter:

> Dear Mrs. Allen,
>
> I was so glad when you first came to our classroom because you taught me something new, and that is the 5 doors. I am so proud that you taught me something new because no teacher ever told me about it and again I want to Thank you very much.
>
> Sincerely yours,
> Eunice Jane Coriz
>
> P.S.
> I used the 5 doors
> when I wrote my mom.

LET STUDENTS PROVE IT TO THEMSELVES

Our first sense awareness experiments, some teachers will recall, were conducted with leaves or grasses as the stimuli. In Alaska in January, leaves and grasses were almost impossible to obtain without stripping the house plants in the schoolroom. So, we used the most obvious and readily obtainable stimulus — paper.

Direct students to feel it, to feel both sides. What words come to mind? Smooth. Rough. Bumpy. Sticky. Are both sides the same? No. How are they different?

Feel the edges, but don't cut yourself. Tear it a little and feel the torn edge. How does this differ?

Answers can be written and perhaps should be, if your class is large. In small classes, answers may be called out. This is the easy way to make comparisons between answers and to make an additional point at the end of this experience.

Ask students to smell it. How does it smell? Like ink. Dry. Like wood. Like paste. Most will be surprised that paper has an odor. One thought it smelled like gasoline.

Look at it. What color is it? All the same? No. Blue lines. Purple lines. Hold it to the light. Now what do you see? Some see clouds, some blotches, some dirt. Do both sides look the same?

Now listen to it. Does paper have a voice? Usually not at first. You may need to suggest dropping, wadding, tearing.

Finally, eat it or a little piece of it. How does it feel on your tongue? What does it taste like?

Following this experiment in Mrs. Moorhead's class at Mt. Edgecumbe school, January 17, 1969, a senior girl, Grace Antoghame, sat down at a typewriter and seemed to be doodling. After she left, we found:

> "She came today and taught us to see, feel, and taste a plain, white fourth-a-sheet of paper that sounded like thunder, chuckled like a small child, crunched like snow and crackled like potato chips. A small piece of paper that felt as smooth and as rough as my bitten-up fingernails. A tiny piece of typing paper that tasted like yesterday's snow that's been aired out too long.
>
> "She gave to us the products of writing, the products we have and yet kept blank and unused. The servants we pushed and shoved aside to the drain of laziness. Letting them sleep a dreamless, meaningless, useless sleep."

This is not a finished piece of writing. Sentences are not complete. Some words are not the right words. Grace would, no doubt, be the first to say that she didn't intend for anyone to read it in its first-draft form. It clearly indicates, however, that she had quite fully investigated a piece of paper from the point of view of a child coming on paper for the first time. This is the whole idea.

In a small class, perhaps you can use a cup of tea or a cookie. You can use your classroom, or any of the familiar objects in it. You may wish to try this experiment with a different object as a warmup exercise for the first five minutes of every class period for a month. You may wish to use it at the end of class periods, sending students out with this reminder of the fun and necessity of turning on all five senses in order to write.

Ann Gulledge (Albuquerque Indian School) used fall leaves with her sophomore students as a means of awakening their senses. At the time, in October, Carl Vicenti wrote:

"An oval shape, rough edge, yellow thing. Smooth and thin, sour taste and dirty. Comes from a tree. Blowing in the grass."

In January, he looked again at what he had written and revised it by writing more nearly complete sentences and by adding a personal relationship — "has to be raked up." Now it read:

> "An oval shape rough edge leaf,
> smooth and thin. Has a sour taste,
> and has a funny smell too, with
> yellow color. Comes in autumn
> when it gets ready to snow. Dirties
> the grass and has to be raked up."

In February, Carl decided to shape his experience with the leaf into a poem. To do this, he addressed the leaf as it it were a person. Personification is a sure-fire way of waking a reader's interest in an inanimate object.

Now, the reader can identify with the leaf. In his last line of this version, Carl added the hint of universality that is characteristic of good poetry. Here is the recurring cycle of seasons and the oneness of things-and-people in the march of time.

> You rough edge, yellow thing
> Very smooth and very thin.
> Blowing in the grass
> Wet and moist
> Dropping off a tree,
> Lying there real still
> Waiting for the snow to fall.

Finally, Carl eliminated unnecessary words (two "very's" and "dropping off a tree" — where else?). He straightened out word usage ("edged" for "edge"), and, instead of telling, he showed his reader by translating "very still" into "eyes shut," and made his reader feel "holding your breath."

FALLEN LEAF

> You, rough edged, yellow thing
> With a sour taste.
> Smooth and thin
> Blowing in the grass
> Wet and moist
> Lying there, eyes shut,
> Holding your breath,
> Waiting for the snow to fall.

Have we read meaning into the words? Certainly. All authors know that occasionally they write better and bigger than they know how to write. This is the witchery of words.

The author selects words that best convey his experience, and those same words convey to the reader whatever richness his own experience has built into them.

Carl's revisions and rewrites moved from rough draft notes based on sense awareness (truth), toward meeting standards of English grammar, toward making writing an art by adding the interest-getting device of personification. Revision normally follows a similar path and herein lies the obvious value of creative writing as an aid in teaching English as a Second Language, in teaching grammar and syntax, and in teaching the arts of communication.

The student with something to say is self-motivated toward learning to say it well. On the way to this end, he is criticizing and correcting his own English usage and revising himself toward excellence.

TURNING WORDS TO MAGIC

The payoff for a writer comes in the kind of magic he can cause to happen when he discovers that it is almost impossible to tell a reader anything. What he can do is to make a reader see, hear, taste, smell, and feel — all by the simple method of putting on paper the details of the writer's own sensory experience.

For example: Mary went to town.

If this isn't important and you don't care to emphasize it, then this simple presentation may serve your purpose. If, however, Mary is an important character in a story and her going to town is something you want your reader to remember, then it will require different treatment, such as:

Mary raked a comb through her short, auburn hair and flung her green sweater around her shoulders without bothering to change from her denim work shirt and jeans. She ran down the front walk and cut across the street toward town barely in time to escape before old Mr. Hamilton, his nose almost touching the windshield, his eyes narrowed against the sun, brought his rusty jalopy to a clattering stop beside her mailbox.

The difference between the two versions is obvious. The first gave no sensory details. The second uses sight and hearing — simply showing what the author saw and heard when he imagined it. Imagining fully — letting it happen before your eyes as if it were a play or a movie — this is the secret of good writing.

A way to help students work into the habit of doing this is suggested in the next chapter.

III

HERE & NOW

This is a method for exercising fingers and senses in order to get them into the habit of writing the sensory detail that makes it possible for the writer to communicate with his reader. It is not a method for producing finished pieces of writing. It is what preliminary sketching is to an artist — a sketch may be incorporated in a finished painting, but it is not the painting.

Even though you may be impatient to see finished stories and poems, you cannot afford to skip this step in the process any more than a concert pianist can afford to neglect practicing scales. Most musicians practice scales to the end of their careers. Most writers would produce more good writing, if they warmed up with an exercise in Here & Now whenever they sat down to work.

The words "scales" and "finger exercises" may carry the wrong connotation. If they make it sound like drudgery, they are misleading. Here & Now experiments are fun.

They lose their value when they are approached in any other way. They involve free, spontaneous reactions. No structured writing form need be remembered and followed. These snatches of writing impose no requirements from rules of grammar. They can and should be sketchy — quickly caught impressions, pinned or tacked to paper in the easiest way possible. Students who dread the chore of writing should find in this kind of exercise "just fun," as our Indian students say. Teachers too will find it fun and should do some of these experiments along with their students.

HERE & NOW is a term frequently used by psychologists and teachers and you may come across it in various contexts. It can be made a class exercise and should be used with groups occasionally. It is perhaps a more useful exercise when pursued privately. It is using a moment in time and the immediate environment of a given place to turn on the senses and record everything.

INTRODUCING HERE & NOW TO STUDENTS

As an exercise in writing, here is one way of introducing Here & Now to a class:

For a few minutes, we are going to open all five of our sense doors and make notes about what we hear, feel, smell, see and taste. The trick is in getting it down on paper exactly as it is to you. We are all sitting here in one room, but each one of us is an individual, with our own special senses, and all of the things around us are a little bit different to each one of us. In that little bit of difference in the way each of us sees, hears, smells, tastes, and feels lies the secret of your special writing style and of my special style.

When we write, we are saying to a reader, "This is the way it looks to me. This is the way I hear it. This is how it feels when it touches me."

If we each write honestly, exactly as it is to us, no two of us will write exactly the same things about how this room looks, about how it smells, or what we hear. Always try to find the exact word that reveals how it is to you, but, for now, don't worry about spelling or sentence structure or anything else. Simply catch it on paper as it is right now.

You may turn on your eyes first and then your skin and then your ears, or your may do it more nearly as it comes to you — all at once. This is the way we finally write a good story, as if we are taking the reader along and letting the story take place around him — its sights and sounds and feelings going on all at once. You may, if you wish, write HERE & NOW in that way, but don't forget to turn on all five senses. Don't be content to look and forget to listen, for example. Do both. Write in the present tense and in first person. Keep jotting down sense experiences as they are coming to you at the moment of writing. For now, try not to remember other sights and odors that you are reminded of from the past. Keep it Here & Now. When you can no longer do that, when you get distracted by something outside the room and have trouble coming back, then the experiment is over and you should quit for now.

I want you to write a Here & Now in this classroom as soon as I tell you to start. Also, I want you to have a notebook beside your bed in your room and to write a Here & Now when you first wake up in the morning, before you get out of bed. If you have to wake up ten minutes earlier than usual, set your mental alarm clock and wake up. Then I want you to continue writing Here & Now experiments in many different situations, at different times of day or night.

It shouldn't be necessary for you to tell where you are or what time it is. A well written Here & Now will make that clear. However, at the beginning I would like to have these dated and the time of day given in the upper righthand corner of the page. Your name goes in the upper lefthand corner.

I want to read some examples so everyone knows exactly how this works. These were written by students at the Institute of American Indian Arts. (Read two or three when the exercise is first introduced. Later, you can read from your own students' work.)

EXAMPLES FROM OTHER INDIAN STUDENTS

HERE & NOW

> As I pour the icy amber-brown liquid, it foams down and around the translucent forms stacked haphazardly in the glass. The foam threatens the rim but, with a profusion of cracklings, sinks to the level of the vaguely cubed ice forms.
>
> My eyes, traveling the length of the glass, notice a strange family of bubbles anchored to the bottom. They seem to peer fixedly -- pleadingly -- through the glass. Suddenly the bubbles split, then form a vertical chain which missils up through the amber until it is shelved on the underside of the marble-like ice.

The ice filters light to eerie shades of yellow and reflects the dark red amber of the liquid, as it holds the bubbles. The bold, molded patterns of a cube weigh down the helpless bubbles. Finally, the chain inches in ascent once more, threads between the marble-ice, up, up until it merges with warm air.

I pick up the cold glass and slowly lift it. The icy marbles caress yet pain my lips. The cool amber liquid slides welcomely down my throat. The fountain of miniature droplets explodes to tickle my nose.

NOTE: *This I found interesting to write about. An ice cube in a glass of Pepsi! Never have I seen anything so beautiful and eerie. . . . I liked the subject so much I decided to write about it again from a wider point of view.*

Two large bubbles stare through the side of the glass like bulging eyes. Silently, smaller bubbles push at them until they slide around the ice, upward to the thin, black line where they disappear. Above the line, a grey strip sits diagonally on the other side of the glass. My eyes follow the grey strip until it meets a blank grey wall — a gentle curve, mostly hidden by a Pepsi bottle and a glass.

As I rise, my eyes search this drab grey cylinder to find what it holds. Dwarfed, misshapen cubes float, neglected, in a dark grey pool. Each little shape nestles in my hand as I fish out a few of the smallest. One by one, I plop the glassy forms into the liquid. Ice clacks, like Gypsy castinets, against ice, and I hear an occasional gurgle as each drops. Then quiet, and I take a drink of my pop.

— Patricia Irving

HERE AND NOW I am aware of the New Mexico State Fair atmosphere. My friends and I are standing in front of the building facing west. This is an exciting place and moment for me and for everybody. People are strolling, laughing, riding, wondering, carrying, and eating. The clouds are getting dark so all the red, yellow, blue pink, and orange colored lights are going on. Like a dream, the rides are spinning their lights in the dark. Under the colorful decorations are people enjoying carnival music. Many stands give out the odor of snacks. I hear many sounds made by the people and music. I am kind of tired and my feet are aching like cramps. I feel like sitting, but it's crowded and wet. My mouth tastes like hot dogs and pickle from what I just ate.

— Grey Cohoe

As I sit here, on this beautiful day, I feel the cool refreshing breeze blowing my hair with a slow drowsy stroke. My black sweater is absorbing the heat from the warm sun. The gum in my mouth is a nuisance with its rough-smooth texture, but I can't keep from occupying my jaw. As I wiggle my toes, I feel the sweatiness between them. In the distance I see the monstrous incinerator, the home for litters. I faintly hear gay whistling of someone, and someone walking down the sidewalk with hard steps and another walking with light, dainty steps. I barely hear the zum-zum sound of the cars and the busy townspeople's chattering sounds, like bees buzzing. I must have fallen to sleep 'cause I hear nothing, I see nothing.

— Madelyn Samuels

Here and now I'm aware of modern art before me. I can still taste the spinach I ate for lunch . . . and the peaches. At this moment, I feel quite hungry. Before me, is a painting which I can't understand. My first impression is that it's not art at all. Colors and different shapes seem to have been thrown together. By chance it came out right.

God created the world — the highest artistic creation known to man. He didn't just slap materials together. He created a miracle of color and composition. In my opinion, chance shouldn't have anything to do with art.

With my second glance, I am beginning to see the abstract figures forming specific shapes, like in a dream. At one corner I see a big orange circle shape with a touch of white, brown, and green. Since I'm hungry, it suggests a fresh, juicy orange.

Gosh! I wish oranges grew that large! At the top right corner, I see a green oval shape. This suggests an ice cold, luscious watermelon. Right above the center there's a cylinder-like shape, fading into a background of black. In the middle is a touch of black, white, and a fleshy redness which suggests a roast ham. I'm beginning to torture myself. It's best that I continue my journey on campus.

— Curtis Link

A thump, thump moves across the library, fades, and quickly dies with the slam of a door. Dull murmurs drift about on the thick air, then seem to fill the spaces between the colorful books, sitting sedately in the shelves.

Tables scattered regularly beside the laden shelves mirror the multicolors of the books. The colors are only shapes, floating unreally on each tabletop.

Too many books — a tall, proud red one; a short, stubby black one; a just-right yellow one; and a fat, blue one. Between them settle the whispers.

A high drone interrupts the air as a fly cruises about my head. With a tired little buzz, it lands on my hand and begins his bath.

First, the wings — brush well with hind legs. Now, to scrub the sides a little, and rub the other legs. Carefully, he returns to the dainty task of massaging his wings. Only the oversides are done today. First, one — very carefully, then the other. Now, he scrubs his hind legs together and, refreshed, buzzes off on his merry way.

— Patricia Irving

Here and now I am aware of an unusual adventure at night and far out from our school. Our picnic is going all right at this moment. I am full and tired from walking around in this soft soil. I am sitting on our water canteen, tasting the strong, black coffee. The coffee burns my mouth, but it is good tasting because it is boiled on an outdoor fire. As I hold the cup to sip, the steam waves against my face, smelling like coffee grains . . . Our fire is huge, flaming into the black space around us. Smoke is visible only against the yellow, orange, and red flames. As the smoke disappears into the dark atmosphere, only the sparks it's carrying shine, but it also disappears into the night sky among the twinkling stars. The fire reflects all our near environment. Once the firelight hits an object, it breaks into the darkness. I can see our bus and car and students, standing around the fire. The mountains are dark monster objects, surrounding us as if we're in a bowl. I can feel the heat, striking one side of me and it colors us all orange. My eyes are irritated by the dry-wood

> smoke. This night makes me feel that I'm in a world of my own. In the dark it is quiet and cool, but I hear singing by the students. The soft folk songs make me feel like going through the clouds. Best of all, I can hear crackling and sparking sounds from the burning fire.
>
> — Grey Cohoe

OPEN ALL FIVE DOORS AND WRITE

Now, you are ready to write.

You will find that some students take to this exercise and enjoy it very much. Others may make a feeble attempt to write one or two paragraphs and then want to give up. Usually the student who does not enjoy writing Here & Now is the one who hasn't fully caught the idea of reporting exactly and fully all of the impressions he gets through his five senses.

This exercise cannot be helpful or fun if a student persists in writing in general terms or refuses to examine his own sense perceptions. Sometimes a reminder from the teacher that he is not putting it down in sufficient detail will help a student turn around and start over. Looking, listening, tasting, smelling, and feeling — while perfectly natural for a baby — are, for many of us lost arts. To regain them takes an act of will, at first, and then it takes on the nature of a religious conversion. Suddenly we come alive to sights, sounds, tastes, odors, and textures. Given enough practice, this new awareness becomes second nature. This is the stage in which good writers live. From their persistent and accurate observations, through their senses, come all their ideas. In seeking to record exactly and honestly, they build rich, connotative vocabularies. In the practice of writing and rewriting, they learn to say clearly and honestly whatever they wish to say.

"Tell it like it is," is the current, ungrammatical way of asking for honest speaking and honest writing. This kind of writing is interesting because it carries the personality of the writer, and we are all interested in people.

Once you and your students have learned to write Here & Now, you are ready to write There & Then. This is an exercise in recalling fully. Again, it is a kind of trick, but one that has paid off for every good writer who ever lived. Those students who have caught the feel of writing Here & Now can now choose whether they will write of their immediate situation or will put themselves in some other time and place and write There & Then.

This exercise, for beginners, should also be written in the present tense and in the first person. The mere mechanics of catching an experience on paper in the present tense and first person helps the student remember to let the setting or action he is recalling unroll around him as if he is, again, in the middle of it. If the place or the scene recalled later becomes a portion of a story or article, it is a simple matter to transpose it to past tense and third person, if desired. It will still retain its "live" quality. This is the easiest way for beginners to achieve in their writing a sense of immediacy and reality.

FOLLOWUP FOR THE TEACHER

We do not ask of this experiment that it be anything more than a warmup for writing. It is not expected to be or to produce a concerto played before an audience. The alert teacher will, however, watch for seeds that can be watered, fed, and cultivated into full-blown poems, stories, articles, plays, or even letters. We can never afford to pass up an opportunity to encourage a student to go on with a finished piece of writing when we come across a sentence, paragraph, or even a word that reveals special excitement, knowledge, or awareness.

Exercises often simply set students to writing and their finished pieces may have nothing at all to do with the immediate or remembered experience caught on paper. Sometimes, in Here & Now writing, however, a certain mood will be captured later in a poem, an observed action may form the basis for a play or story scene or for an anecdote used in an article. When you, the teacher, find anything at all on these or any other papers presented by students that strikes fire with you, suggest to the student that he may have at his fingertips the stuff of a polished piece.

This is not the time for half-attention reading of student papers. You are not giving grades, you are mining for a person. Sometimes the simplest sounding statement may, on a second searchful reading glint and sparkle off the page. "You're reading meaning into it," one education specialist said, and this is true. However, the student who writes one sentence beyond his comprehension can be encouraged to keep reaching beyond himself until he consistently writes profound truth and honest emotion. Please do not make the mistake of settling for too little. You are cheating yourself and your student when you expect from him anything less than his highest capability.

We are assuming that none of our teachers ever say or think, "My student can't write anything worth very much." Those teachers who dare think so small are apt to rationalize: "He attended a poor elementary school." "English is his second language and he'll never understand it." "He's just an Indian." "He has a low I.Q." Nonsense!

We could assume that all of these put-downs were true of some imaginary student and still he would be an authority on certain aspects of human life (our universal subject for writing). He should know more than most about poor elementary schools and should be expected to have some sound opinions on what makes them poor. He should know, first hand, the problems presented by the English language to one who regularly carries on all exchanges in his home in Choctaw or Cree or Navajo or Eskimo. He should know how it feels to be consistently underrated on an excuse as flimsy as the accident of birth. The results of I. Q. tests are no longer saluted as respectfully as they were some years back, partly because they are largely irrelevant to the business of living.

Our imaginary student in which all deprivations meet is still an authority on a thousand and one subjects -- how to find food when you're hungry, how to keep warm in winter, the hurts of discrimination, what makes a poor school teacher and what makes a good one, should Indians be sent to segregated schools, what is good about living on a reservation, which ideas are best expressed in his first language, and the whole range of subjects of inherent interest to young people.

The very fact of Indianness provides our students with the raw material of experiences that are unique and, therefore, of interest to the general reader. Writing is one field in which Indian and Eskimo students have many tangible advantages. The good teacher will believe this so sincerely that he or she cannot be unconvinced by any "mere-Indian" myths he hears or by any self-deprecating, low-image students in his classes. These young men and women are authorities on twelve to twenty years of living. They deserve an attentive, respectful listener to whatever they have to say in the range of their experience. It is our business to help them believe in the validity of their experience and to help them develop the skills for communicating to others what they know and feel.

IV

WHAT SHALL I WRITE?

Students have brain-washed teachers into expecting a minimum of effort on written work. The first question following almost any writing assignment is, "How long's it hafta be?" The "hafta" implies minimal interest in the assignment and minimal standards for the finished piece. The teacher is involuntarily trapped into setting minimal limits and even those usually bring forth a groan from the class. This pattern of attitudes and interaction must be broken up, if we are to lead students into the fun of writing that normally precedes learning to write well.

The only good tool for breaking up the pattern is personal interest — set the student to writing something that catches and holds his interest because it is what he, and he alone, knows all about. That subject is the story of his life.

"Old stuff," you say?

It is, of course. Educators frequently tell jokes about the eight-year-old who has written her autobiography three or four times.

"My Indian students are too reticent. They won't write about themselves," you may object and with good reason.

When the reason for the assignment is explained and the fears of students taken into consideration in advance, however, the Life Story comes close to being a sure-fire starter. The student's first assumed reason for the assignment is that the teacher is nosy or is trying to get information that can be used against him. Fears range from those as culture-centered as belief in demon possession to those as universally human as personal reserve and self-protection. The reason must be fully explained because that makes all the difference between success and failure.

The teacher's reason for the life-story assignment is to help the student discover experiences from which he can make his own future writing assignments. This must honestly be the teacher's reason. All information gained must be considered strictly confidential. At the same time, a life story (written as suggested) will surely become the basis for a new and deepened understanding between student and teacher.

This understanding plays an essential role in the development of the student's writings. When this assignment is finished, the teacher will know just what it is Johnny Nez or Betty Bighorse is attempting to say in other writings and can offer real help. Nothing more surely discourages writing than to have a teacher who has misunderstood a first draft make suggestions from a point of view entirely different from the student's.

To the question, regarding the life-story assignment, "How long's it hafta be?" you can safely answer; "As long as you want to make it. This is for you, nor for me. Just be sure you don't leave out anything because that might be the very experience that could be the basis for your best poem or story or play."

You, the teacher, should know whether or not you need to assign a Due Date. I prefer not to. However, I do watch for signs of lagging along the way, of boredom, of readiness to get on with other writing. Some students will never finish this assignment and it is worth nothing to insist. Occasionally a student will falter and stop on this assignment, write on something else for weeks or months, and then decide to finish his life story. If your schedule is such that you must assign a Due Date, then do so. If some students wish to keep writing, you can always extend the time. You should allow an extension, if the student is still interested and writing.

Your writing equipment will affect the kind of response you get on this assignment. An excellent, inexpensive notebook for this purpose is the spiral-bound one that can be ordered from GSA, No. 7530-286-6952. It is not bulky and yet is large enough, and not too large, to encourage filling it. Students who start will astonish themselves, provided they start writing in sensory detail. A kind of chemical reaction sets in, once we start recalling in detail on paper — one sense stimulates another sense and the senses stimulate the memory. Most life-story writers set down far more than they thought they remembered.

In addition to the notebook, you the teacher, must make provision for privacy. Stress, when you make the assignment, the importance of not sharing life stories between students. The story becomes violated in this way and the writer soon loses interest. So, the student must consider this a "dear diary" kind of committment, never to be passed from student to student during the writing.

In the same spirit, the teacher with a locked cabinet or file can secure the story's privacy by locking it up between writing sessions. Most dormitories do not provide lock-and-key privacy. If your schedule will permit students to work on their life stories during class sessions, it is a simple matter for you to lock them up until the student's next writing time. If your schedule will not permit in-school writing time, you can still offer safekeeping for notebooks the morning after a night writing session, or over the weekend. The mere act of offering locked protection provides the assignment the proper air of integrity. It is under these conditions that the assignment performs its ultimate function, for the student and for the teacher.

Make the assignment in your own words, never read it. The ideal way is to make the assignment to each student privately, looking him straight in the eye. It can still be a personal assignment even though it must be made to a class, provided you become familiar with all its facets in advance and provided you honestly believe that your students can reach whatever goals they set for themselves. Students will detect faking at this point. So, shall we assume that we have no teachers who believe that Indians and Eskimos are below par intellectually, culturally, or emotionally? If one such should have snuck into the BIA, this assignment will not work for that teacher.

THE LIFE STORY ASSIGNMENT

Please write the story of your life, from the time you can remember anything until you are 30 years old.

Write in your Here & Now notebook because I want you to write in the same manner as I asked you to write your awareness experiments that we call Here & Now. Refer back, now and then, to see that you are writing sensory detail, giving qualities, not merely the names for things. Don't forget Eyes, Ears, Nose, Mouth, Fingers!

Include from the past: home, family, play, school, friends, teachers, summers, sicknesses, sadness, hurts, lonely times, decisions, happy times, achievements. Include about the future: exactly the same, plus training, profession, travel, marriage, children, dreams — everything.

The way to work is this: For everything that happened to you before today, IMAGINE yourself back in the setting, in the time, and among the people. Then write as if it is HERE & NOW. When you are writing into the future, ahead of today, again IMAGINE yourself into the exact setting, among the exact people, in an exact time and write everything as you want it to be.

Your great grandparents, your grandparents, your immediate family — these cannot be changed now, but they are an important part of the person who is YOU today. As for the future, imagine and firmly believe (because it is true) that nothing stands in your way of being and doing whatever you want to be and do. (Nothing, that is, except possibly YOU — your failure to make a plan and your failure to aim high enough.)

I have several good reasons for this assignment. They all have to do with your success in writing and, in the end, they have to do with your success in life. My reasons are:

1. Not until you have examined your whole life — past, present, and future — do you know yourself what it is that you have to say on paper. Of course, we can't expect readers to want to read what you say until you have something important to say. That "something" will reveal itself all right, never fear, once you take a good look and really know WHO YOU ARE.

2. In order for me to help you say exactly what you want to say, I need to know who you are and what you are trying to say. This assignment will help us get acquainted,

and this is necessary — not because I am nosy, but because I am the one who is trying to help you say clearly and in an interesting way whatever you have to say.

3. In writing your Life Story, YOU (not I) will select your subjects, your style, and the form in which you will write. Not that you will think about these things. But when I read your story, I will find parts of it that you have written so they make me sit up and take notice. Some parts, you won't really be interested in as you write. You will write them just to get them out of the way, and I can tell this from the way you write. Other parts, even when you may not know it, will interest you greatly. These parts will come off the paper filled with excitement. They will show me the style in which you can write best, and they will give YOU ideas and subjects enough to write and rewrite into finished poems, stories, articles, or plays for the rest of the year (possibly, enough for the rest of your life).

WARNING. Write alone. Don't show this to anyone but me. Especially don't show it around the dorm. This is for our own use — yours and mine. It is nobody's business but ours, and it is my business for no reason except that it will show me how to help you write. Tell all and tell it the way it was and will be. Your sins and silliness will be safe with me. I am not going to criticize — not now or at any time you are in my classes — what you choose to write about. My job is to help you write well whatever you want to say on paper.

So, turn on your five senses and let yourself go. Write rapidly. Pay no attention to anything except getting it on paper in sensory terms. Grammar and spelling we can work out later. Do write it so I can read it. If you can't, I'll ask you to type it from your notebook, but I really don't want it typed at first. The YOU will come out better through your fingers from the tip of a pen than it will through a typewriter. Write it by hand and I promise to do my best to read it.

You will need to work hard and fast, in class and outside. I am (or am not) giving you a Due Date, but I want you to get all the way to being an old person of 30 before you must give me your story. Getting all the way through is a part of the experience that is necessary, if you are to get the most benefit. When you take your notebook out of the classroom, just be sure that you get it back, and be sure that you keep it to yourself. Your own interest in writing the story thins out, if you let others read it before it is finished. I don't know exactly why, but it does. This is your personal story. Don't let anybody else have a chance to stick pins in it.

V

NOW THAT YOU HAVE A MANUSCRIPT

If it is a Here & Now experiment or a Life Story manuscript, remember that this is a kind of raw materials document. It is not a finished piece of writing and probably never will be.* You could receive an exception. If so, you will recognize it by the effect it has on you when you read.

Instead of reading words, you may see pictures, hear sounds, smell odors, feel your skin crawl, or taste food or dust or juniper berries. When this happens, you will know that you have a writer or, at least, a potential writer on your hands. In fact, any word on a student manuscript that makes you see something from a fresh point of view is exactly what you should be looking for as you read.

Creative writing comes from within the student. Its source is the real or imagined experience of that student.

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*Exception: Barney Mitchell who began his life story when he was a senior at the Institute of American Indian Arts and wrote for two years. It became MIRACLE HILL, published by the University of Oklahoma Press.

It is, in that sense, uniquely his own and he is seeking his own personal way of expressing something real. Almost always, with this kind of material, the writing is free, more like talking than like writing.

Whatever you do with life stories or any other student writing, don't make the mistake of letting broken rules of grammar blind you to honesty and freshness of expression. This is not to say that you should forget about grammar. Nobody can expect to say anything on paper and be taken seriously unless he is willing to learn and use to his advantage the accepted forms of standard English. However, one delightful feature of writing is that it can develop in stages.

Indian and Eskimo students enjoy being reminded that if they say something and their English words don't come out quite right, they have made an embarrassing mistake. They agree that quite often they hesitate or refuse to speak for fear of embarrassment. Writing, on the other hand, can be corrected before anyone else reads it (with the possible exception of a trusted teacher who doesn't quite count since she is there to help students avoid mistakes). This suggestion alone is sufficient to gain student acceptance of revision as a basic technique of writing. Assume, then, that if your attitude is open, accepting, and sympathetic you and the student will be able to work together toward a finished, grammatical form of whatever manuscript he produces. Your attitude toward the student and toward his first drafts is all-important.

First of all, you must have a relationship in which the urge toward creativity can grow. Red, uncompromising markings — Sp., tense, never end a sentence with a preposition, wrong word, and all the others — often serve the same reputed purpose as waving a red flag in the face of a bull. A student's explorations into creativity can grow and flower only under careful cultivation and weeding, appropriate feeding, the right amount of water, and an ample supply of sunshine.

Your expectation should be, and can justifiably be, well above the known ability of each of your students. When I began working with Indians and Eskimos, I was warned that it would take them a long, long time to produce good writing. This seemed a reasonable expectation. The students, however, soon dispelled this assumption. Given the most basic instruction in reporting sense impressions, many students turn in first manuscripts that contain vivid, perceptive writing. Sometimes it is a word only. At other times, a phrase or two rings out with complete honesty and keen insight. Occasionally an entire piece of writing is unified, direct, and true. Almost never are the words all correctly spelled or the rhetoric flawless.

HOW TO RECOGNIZE AND NURTURE CREATIVITY

1. Expect more of a student than you can at first prove.

2. Praise everything in a manuscript that is more vivid, more aware, more perceptive than you have found in that particular student's last piece of writing. This can mean praising a word spelled properly (if the student has not spelled it correctly before). It can mean praising one good figure of speech, or a particularly active verb.

3. Make notes for yourself immediately (and later for the student) of his grammar needs. Never lose sight of high writing standards, but you may delay stressing those to the student until he himself sees the need in terms of his desire to say something that is important to him.

4. Never settle for mediocre effort from a student. You may have to settle for a mediocre piece of writing, but a student who is to make anything at all of writing must be urged toward his top performance whenever he writes. Top performance standards must vary for each student.

5. Never judge a piece of writing by whether or not you happen to like or to be in sympathy with its content. If the material is important to the student writer, it must also be important to you, the teacher. Render whatever assistance you can, always in the spirit of helping the student to say clearly and in an interesting way whatever he wants to say. You may not believe that Indians have a case against white men, but if your student believes they do and wants to say so, it is your business, not to convert him to your way of thinking, but to help him speak his piece in the strongest possible way.

6. If you must give grades, grade on response to suggestion, writing discipline, reaction to both praise and criticism, openness to sensory experience, use of remembered details, patience with the mechanics of writing, vocabulary growth and interest in words.

7. Student writing need not be or sound "Indian."

Creative Writing is justified by the permanent good it does the author. We cannot with any certainty produce an author. Never grade a student down because he doesn't become one. We may never contribute to literature, but under the kind of teacher-student relationship in which creativity can grow, we will inevitably contribute to the growth of the student.

HELP IS AVAILABLE TO TEACHERS

Those teachers who are participating in our Writing Project have the privilege of seeking professional guidance in handling student manuscripts. You will understand, of course, that the Project Director cannot undertake the reading and marking of all manuscripts from several classes in twelve or thirteen schools. However, she is eager to mark some samples from your students' work in order to guide you in handling the others. You may select from student papers those that baffle you, or those you think reveal no talent for writing. Preferably, send one manuscript from each group. You may send one or two life stories, a few Here & Now experiments, and one or two drafts of stories, poems, plays, or whatever.

The Project Director will mark manuscripts as she does when working directly with students. Teachers will find it helpful to study these comments and suggestions. Again, one person cannot work directly with twelve or fifteen hundred students, but teachers can learn techniques of the craft of writing along with their students.

In general, the study of marked manuscripts is by far the best way for teachers to learn how to help students.

In order that we may avoid confusion caused by using different methods of marking, I would like to explain how I handle Here & Now and the Life Story Assignment, and the way I mark papers that are to be revised into finished pieces of writing.

My way is not necessarily better than some other way. If we agree however on a method of marking, then students, teachers, the Project Director and consultants will all understand each other. Special developments appear on student papers and must be dealt with in detail on paper or in conference. Writing detailed comments through student manuscripts is basic to the strategy of this project. True, this requires a great deal of time. True, you have too many students. Still, suppose you try it on the AA principle -- one day at a time. Get students writing by the methods suggested in the first part of this manual. Somehow manage the time necessary for marking manuscripts in detail for one day, for one week, possibly for three weeks. By then, I guarantee you'll be so interested and will be seeing such personal development in your students that your twenty-four hours per day will stretch enough to allow you to continue.

To save a little time, we can use a sort of shorthand that will fit into margins and between the lines of a manuscript.

MARKING "RAW MATERIALS" WRITINGS
(Life Story, Here & Now, etc.)

If possible, read through any piece of writing once without a pencil in your hand. Read for general impression. Read for enjoyment. Read as a reader, not as a teacher. Be sensitive to your own reaction, particularly to your emotions. Are you amused? Horrified? Touched? Frightened? Depressed? Nothing?

Now you are ready to mark.

Poem? Is this something you'd like to develop as a poem?

I usually ask this question in a margin beside a passage that made me feel any strong emotion. Not all such passages turn into poems, of course, and some of them shouldn't. Still, as a student considers whether or not he feels strongly and would like to write a poem, he is discovering a great deal about writing: 1. That it is his personal reaction to objects, events, or people that are the stuff of writing. 2. That good poetry grows out of deep emotion. 3. That he can find release from his strong (often self-injuring) feelings by diluting them in ink and spreading them on paper.

If a student feels deeply enough about anything for the feeling to come across to you as you read his casual writing, he probably has the makings of a poem in that particular experience. You may want to discuss it with him or to suggest on the margin of his paper: 1. A possible beginning line or ending line. Even a poor one may inspire the student to try his hand at one of his own. 2. A possible form -- ballad, free verse, limerick, ode, lyric. 3. The suggested tone — humorous, love, patriotic, satire.

Know your student and you will know whether it is enough merely to suggest that he has the seed that can be cultivated into a poem. Some students need, particularly at first, to see you waiting, almost holding your breath, expecting them to come forth with something good. An extra note or two on the margin can make these students itch to get started.

Story? Is this something you would like to develop as a story?

I ask this question in the margin beside passages that contain a great deal of action, that tell about new experiences, that reveal tense personal relationships, that have to do with hard decisions, etc.

Real people discovering what life is all about (what makes life good, how to triumph over personal or social problems, what to believe) — this is the raw material of stories. When you find any hint of this on a student paper, that material can then be presented in scenes and the scenes arranged into a story.

Char. sketch? Is this a person you would enjoy writing about?

Family members are frequently mentioned in student writings. If we were to judge by Indian and Eskimo student writing, we could hardly fail to conclude that grandmothers and grandfathers are the most loved people in the world. The grandparents of our Indian and Eskimo students provide unusually good material for character sketches because many of them are standing astride two cultures and their points of view are pertinent to understanding between peoples.

Occasionally a student will benefit from writing out his hatred for someone who has mistreated him or members of his family or tribe. This, too, is valid material for a character sketch.

Article? You've expressed an opinion here that might make a good article.

Magazine editors are eager for material written from the Indian point of view. Remember, though, that your students (regardless of whether they have been brought up on a reservation or close to any ethnic problems) are young people. They have strong opinions of various kinds and these can be developed into articles.

How-to Article? You may have a How-to-do or How-to-make something article here. You scund like an authority on the subject.

Many Indian and Eskimo students are experts on special kinds of fishing, hunting, trapping, rodeo riding, dancing, singing, drumming, beadwork, ethnic customs, tribal history, story telling, costumes, cooking, ceremonies, regional fauna, edible and medicinal roots, bark, herbs, berries — on a thousand things that other Americans would like to know and would, therefore, read about. Watch for indications of these special knowledges on papers and in conversations with students. Again, a reminder — don't let the Indian-Eskimo idea limit you in your watching and listening.

These are young people who are also experts on wrestling, fashion, race relations, rock music and dancing, dormitory life, and a thousand other arts and skills. Articles on how to do or make something are always in demand and your students may have the first-hand knowledge necessary for teaching others in a step-by-step article.

✓ - Good!

A small check mark will fit in above a word, in a margin, or anyplace. In my code it means "I like this." I use this mark generously and am usually rewarded with extra effort by the student.

x - Not good enough.

By this I mean, "You can do better, try again, or this isn't up to your standard."

sp. - Incorrect spelling.

All teachers know this one. However, I usually correct spelling on a first draft instead of marking it. I correct spelling on several drafts, if I feel that the student is struggling with more fundamental values — meaning, clarity, accurate detail, or whatever.

My reason is that I don't want to stop the student from revising. A whole red sea of "sp's" on a returned manuscript can be most discouraging. The student is apt to think, "She (or he) doesn't care about what I'm trying to say. All she cares about are those silly rules." I don't see any harm in avoiding that stopper for a while.

Often a student who is sincerely trying to write a poem or an essay and who repeatedly comes across the proper spelling of a word he needs will learn the correct spelling in passing. If he persists in spelling the same word incorrectly (in his later drafts), then I insist, as a last step in finishing a manuscript, that he look up words and spell them correctly. At that stage in his writing, he is willing to learn how to spell because proper spelling then serves his own purpose. It makes his work look professional and thus gets him a literate reader.

You may discover better motivation. I had a college professor who read student papers with a pair of scissors in his hand. When he came across a misspelled word, he clipped the upper right-hand corner off the paper and read no farther. We spelled correctly in order to get our papers read. I'm not sure that most high school students are ready for this method, but try it if you like.

ktwtbt - Keep together words that belong together.

This series of letters in a margin usually amuses the student at first, and amused is not a bad state of mind in which to revise. Accidental word or phrase order happens to all of us on first drafts. It should not happen on later drafts, but frequently does, as in the classified ad, "Cow for sale by lady with red and white spots." Or in the really confused classic that Neil Snortum gives in his book on rhetoric, "What did you bring that book that I didn't want to be read to out of up for?"

A teacher or any reader coming fresh to a manuscript will stumble over these oddball arrangements, but an author is often too close to what he intended to say for him to see the difficulty unless it is pointed out to him. Occasionally, these happen as a result of translating from an original Indian language into English. In that case, the teacher may have to go into considerable explanation. Otherwise, the student can revise readily, once he sees the trick his words have played on him.

tr - Transpose.
∿

I usually mark the body of the manuscript (using the usual editor's curved line over and under) to straighten out the order of letters, words, phrases, sentences, paragraphs, or whatever appears in the wrong order for clarity or greatest effectiveness.

par. - Start a new paragraph.

Train students to look at a page of prose writing after it is typed. Solid blocks of print frighten readers. Sometimes the rules for paragraphing may need bending a little in order to provide print-shy readers with space enough on a page to keep them reading. My rule is: Paragraph partially by eye. It is usually possible to discover some slight subject change, if you must justify shorter paragraphs in order to make a page look readable.

ing - Too many sentences are beginning with "ing" participial phrases.

These are habit forming, it seems, as are many forms of accidental repetition. A style that begins every paragraph with an "ing" word, or that runs three sentences together, all with participial opening phrases, becomes monotonous. Such sentences are to be used sparingly. A more direct statement is usually stronger and far more effective.

In addition, all initial participial phrases need checking for one pitfall. That is, the opening phrase must refer to the grammatical subject. Strunk & White give a typical reverse example: "Being in a dilapidated condition, I was able to buy the house very cheap."

clar. - Clarify. Your meaning isn't clear.

Again, if the confusion can be blamed on second-language problems (vocabulary, syntax, or whatever), the teacher will need to explain and help the student make his meaning clear in English. I usually say, "Tell it to me . . . Now, write it that way and we'll revise from there."

Most students who use English as a second language can make their meaning clear when they speak. They tighten up and stumble over grammar rules when they write. A personal feedback in which the teacher can say, "I don't understand. Can you say it a different way?" quickly shows the student his problem and helps him correct it in his own words.

A student who has no second-language hurdles can usually manage his own revision (once the lack of clarity is pointed out to him). However, he may argue, 'It says just what I mean," or "There's no clearer way to say it."

In such cases, I usually find that a sentence or paragraph has arrived on paper containing only part of what a student was thinking when he wrote. In an effort to say something briefly or in striking terms, as essential word or phrase will be clearly a part of the thinking, but still fail to get recorded on paper. The student honestly believes that he said it all and will be astonished when he can't find the total thought in his copy.

Sometimes writing is not clear because the writer forgot the reader's five doors. He may be trying to TELL his reader instead of SHOW him. He has probably selected words high on the ladder of abstraction instead of presenting images of sight, sound, taste, fragrance, and feeling. To clarify such a passage is a mere matter of translating into sensory terms in order that the reader can experience for himself whatever the writer wants him to know.

Often passages are unclear because they are not specific. Caution students to watch for sentences that cause the reader to ask: When? Where? Why? How long? Who? Answer such questions and the passage will become clear.

Scene - Develop into a scene.

This is a marking I often use opposite a passage of sweeping, ground-covering narration. If something important to the story development depends on the action described, then usually it should not be skipped over hurriedly. If it is, the reader will be mislead.

A writer's judgment is not something that can be handed over from me to you or from you to the student. Judgment develops, usually with a great deal of writing and rewriting. You the teacher, if you have read widely, have been conditioned to expecting the steps in a story or article to be presented fully. If something is presented fully, your reading will have conditioned you to expect that it is to be used to bring the story or article to a satisfying conclusion. Most students, especially Indian and Eskimo students, have not read that much. We can hope that they will read widely and can provide them with reading material (something many of them have not had at home). As they read, they will begin to sense which parts of their writing need the blow-by-blow treatment. Until this sense develops, you can lend students a little of your intuition.

).
ene - Obligatory scene.

The development of a story requires that the writer fulfill his promises to his reader. If the writer has been keeping Boy and Girl apart for two-thirds of a story (to take the most obvious example), when they finally get together, the reader demands to be on hand to see their meeting. It is not enough to say, "So the next day they happened to meet on the street and decided they'd get married after all."

r. - Narrative.

This means that a scene is developed unnecessarily. It is a marking I seldom need, but occasionally a student whose writer's nose for selectivity is not yet developed will tell everything in the same wealth of detail. This leaves his writing with no emphasis because it has too much emphasis.

The action described may slow the story too much or a developed scene, at this point, may give the wrong emphasis to something not all that significant. Most students' natural antipathy for writing in detail helps them avoid this hazard, but we cannot depend on that. Selection must become a positive skill.

If you, an experienced reader, feel impatient with the time required for reading a passage, the chance is good that it could have been told quickly in narration. Most students can learn the art of selection, but I have come across a few who never improved in this. These are the ones who will never become writers.

cliché - Say it freshly.

Most clichés were good when their authors first thought of them. Now they are worn out. Say to your student writer: TELL IT AS IT IS TO YOU! Relive it in your memory and write as it passes before you. Remember your five senses and put on paper the sensory qualities and your own personality will make it a fresh statement.

active voice - Transpose from passive voice to active.

Students as beginning writers, Indian students especially, fall into the pit of the passive voice in an effort to hide behind their words. Instead of writing, "I'll always remember walking through the cemetery," beginning writers almost invariably write, "Walking through the cemetery will always be remembered by me." Somehow that "I" at the beginning of a sentence is too bold for our students.

Once in a blue moon, the passive voice is useful and right but, in general, the active voice is direct, less wordy, and infinitely stronger than the passive voice. The habit of hiding can be broken, with practice and reminders, and then the student himself will begin to feel uncomfortable with the few passives that creep into his first drafts. This should not, of course, keep a writer from using the passive voice when it better serves his purpose, but most of our beginning writers don't need this reminder.

adv. - Too many words ending in "ly."

This is monotonous, but it is also careless writing. If the student gets the habit of selecting the exact nouns and verbs and, when necessary, adjectives for what he has to say, he will need very few adverbs. Usually, the idea in the adverb can be included in the noun and verb if these are chosen for their connoted meanings. Excellence in writing depends a great deal on making one word do the work of two or of ten. When in doubt as to which word to choose, always prefer nouns, then verbs, then adjectives but in limited numbers.

PoV - Point of view.

In general, stories and poems are written from a single point of view. That is, through one person's eyes. Changes, if they occur, must be for a good reason and normally require a conscious transition (even though it may be nothing more than extra spacing on the manuscript). Beginners will do well to practice staying behind one pair of eyes, one nose, one set of ears, tastebuds, and fingertips. Switching point of view is a skill to be learned after the single narrative angle is mastered. For a student who is having trouble with this, I recommend writing first drafts in the first person. It is a simple matter to transpose to the third person in the finishing stage of a manuscript.

cool it - Put this away overnight or for a week while you work on something else.

A piece of writing may sound deathless at the moment of creation but, after it and the author have cooled off, it can turn out to be contrived, too studied, or confusing. Many of the problems will be apparent to the author after a cooling-off period. Passages that need this treatment may be spotted by the teacher when he finds a student deaf to suggestions for improvement. Such passages often evolve as a result of long searching through the Thesaurus for an unusual word, or of piling up adjectives instead of selecting the exact one, or of getting carried up into the rarified air of abstraction during the heat of creation. None of these faults are fatal and a period of bed rest can usually bring about a cure. Neil Snortum suggests that his students read such writings later, coming at them coldly "like something slid under your door while you slept."

Cc? - Critics circle?

Shall we have this duplicated and get criticisms from the class? This is often done anonymously, but not necessarily. Sometimes the author prefers to have his name on copies and to take suggestions and criticism openly. Sometimes a student will choose to wait until he has made one or more revisions before letting anyone else read his work. Sometimes he will choose not to show his work to the class. I respect a student's choice.

Most who are serious about wanting to write will, in time, discover the values in class criticism. I've had students criticize me for not using this technique often enough and I think they are right. Critic sessions provide an opportunity to educate all the class in almost every phase of writing. They also harden the soul a little — something that most writers need. Finally, such sessions give the teacher an opportunity to instruct students in what to expect from the comments of readers -- from the average reader, not to expect much that is helpful.

Research - You need more information.

I use this marking when a student reveals both an interest and ignorance. Students often write a sketchy sentence or two about tribal ceremonies or customs and then finishes lamely, "My uncle knows all about this." This is the point at which I suggest that he talk with his uncle. Interviews, particularly when they span a generation or culture gap, are of great benefit to both participants. In addition, the student who is eager for writing material almost invariably learns more than he thought he wanted to know and often acquires material for several pieces of writing. Sometimes, a student writes that he doesn't know anything about his tribe. Until he does know, he doesn't really know himself. You may be able to suggest books that will be of help to him. Any broadening of knowledge is of use to a potential writer. He may never write an article or story on what he learns, but whatever he writes will be enriched.

0 - I circle words that are repeated by accident. Three or four blue circles around the same word on a page of manuscript make these first-draft accidents show up and enable a student to look for synonyms.

When marking student papers, ask, in the nearest margin, the questions that come into your mind as you read. You will have questions, if you read as an interested human being, not merely as a teacher. Your questions will usually show a student where he has left out detail that will make his story or poem more effective.

In addition, the student will appreciate this much attention being given to his experience and he will blossom out for that very reason. We all like and need a good listener. You must be that to your students. So few people have ever listened to them! Mostly, as teachers, we're too busy talking. Let's listen for a change and put our questions in writing. Our students will write better and we just might learn something.

In addition to making comments and asking questions throughout a manuscript, I often write a paragraph or a page for the author. These would be more helpful to you, if you could see the student's first or second draft that prompted the over-all comment. Unfortunately, most of the manuscripts were handed back and polished into finished pieces of writing.

A sample comment or two will have to serve our purpose now.

> Gerald, you have the makings of a story here. I assume that you want your reader to like the boy and be pulling for him. Most people will forgive a child for taking something, but only if he has strong motivation. You must make us believe that the boy is a real artist. Paints are as essential to him as bread is to most people.
>
> How about putting him in a situation where he sees colors that most people don't see? Perhaps he is in fourth or fifth grade at school. Others in the class answer the teacher's question about some object in the usual way. Your boy sees it differently. When he says what he sees, the class, the teacher — everybody — thinks he's off his rocker. He simply has to show them.

Now, you see, he is motivated and your reader is in there rooting for him to get some paints — by hook or by crook, if necessary — and show the world.

This may not be the way you want to do it. Any number of ways will work. The point is, by some means, you need to motivate the boy and make the reader pull for him. Once you have done this, you'll have the form of your story right. Shall we give it a try?

# # # #

Louise, your short pieces make me think you might enjoy trying your hand at Haiku. It is a traditional Japanese form and provides some discipline, but also allows free association of ideas.

Content: Usually starts with something from nature — flowers, birds, trees, seasons. Some Haiku writers always mention or suggest the seasons. Then, the poem makes some comment on life — something suggested by your observation of nature.

Form: Three lines only.
Line 1 - 5 syllables
Line 2 - 7 syllables
Line 3 - 5 syllables

Haiku suggests meaning rather than spelling it out. The best ones require several readings and then the meaning, some with an "Ah! I see!"

# # # #

Aggie, think of a poem as something designed and planned like a picture. It must have unity and this begins with your first line because your last line depends on the first. Very often it is as if you had an enclosing circle that defines the shape of your idea. This can take the form of repetition of words (especially repetition that builds, that is, takes on added meaning — a word like a stone that picks up moss as it rolls). Or an idea present in your first line can be brought to a conclusion at the end and this will shape and contain your poem.

However you do it, your ideas should be all neatly tucked in together like a dozing cat with paws and tail all confined in one simple and complete design.

In this poem, you might suggest the completion of the idea with a change to an upbeat color at the end. That, however, is up to you. Find a way to fulfill the promise of your beginning and complete your design.

# # # #

Jerry, a story shows (and I do mean shows) a moment of CHANGE in a character's life. If you intended to show that, I've missed it so it isn't clear enough. The change should be definite and clear and it should manifest itself in some symbolic action — something the character does that will convince the reader that he has really changed.

As it is, it seems to me that Kenny starts out a dreamer and ends a dreamer. This is all right except that at the end he should, perhaps, be dreaming toward the future instead of toward the past. He should have done an about-face, somehow.

I think you are being hobbled by things as they are. I want you to write from reality, but it should be FROM — to write things just as they are is not art; that is photography or, rather, candid camera shots.

Start with real people, if you wish. Start with real situations, but shape them into something bigger — something that applies to a great many people, not just one. Unless you do this, you have no story.

You have a good character here and some good situations. You've handled your dream sequences very well, it seems to me, but your story as a whole needs some rethinking. You can do it.

# # # #

Larry, use images to describe purely mental or emotional states. Images are more individual and more expressive than names of things, than abstract words. Images can carry not only what the poet means intellectually, but all that he feels. It's as if you roll thought and feeling into a ball and throw it, all in a wad, at your reader.

# # # #

David, the skillful writer makes his reader feel what he himself has felt. Good writing has very little to do with printed words on a page of paper. It is a shared experience. If you look long and honestly at your experience and give it in sensory terms to your reader, it can be for the reader as if you wrote it in tears or blood or in ripples of laughter. He will no longer read your words, he will suffer or enjoy as you did. You will be speaking, not to his eyes and brain, but directly to his heart. I know you can do it. You have proved it to me.

VI

THE RAW MATERIAL OF THE WRITING BUSINESS

Words are a writer's raw material. He needs many and varied words at his disposal, if he is to have command over the right words at the right time. Coleridge called poetry "the best words in their best order."

James Lipton in AN EXALTATION OF LARKS says: "Our language, one of our most precious natural resources in the English-speaking countries, is also a dwindling one that deserves at least as much protection as our woodlands, streams and whooping cranes. We don't write letters, we make long-distance calls; we don't read, we are talked to, in the resolutely twelve-year-old vocabulary of radio and television. Under the banner of Timesaving we are offered only the abbreviated, the abridged, the aborted . . . . Before it is too late I would like to propose a language sanctuary, a wild-word refuge, removed and safe from the hostile environment of our TV-tabloid world."*

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Grossman Publishers

Mr. Lipton's book suggests a fascinating word game that you and your students will enjoy playing -- the game of richly-connotated categories for things and people. Students can be asked to bring in one a day for a week or for a month, or it may be a game that only one or two will enjoy, from time to time, with the teacher.

Neologism is another game that may appeal to the few rather than to a class, but those who enjoy it should be encouraged to coin new words and phrases, or to make new use of a word that adds to or changes its meaning. Such changes often come about by listening to the sounds of words or by deriving original words from onomatopoetic values. This requires a good ear and a pinch of imagination. For example, the names of Edward Lear's animals — Yonghy-Bonghy-Bo, Bisky Bat, the Pobble who had no toes, etc. or Wallace Stevens's "thunder's rattapallax" is a good example.

New words sometimes come from language blending and many Indians and Eskimos are in an excellent position to give this a try. English has been enriched by almost every language it has touched. Natives from Mexico who inhabited areas now know as Texas, Arizona and New Mexico before the Pilgrims landed on the East Coast, and who first owned California, provided the English language, not only with place names, but with the entire Cowboy tradition with its sombreros, remudas, rancheros, and all the rest. The official language of the United States must hang its head in shame at having picked up so little flavor and sauce from its first natives.

Telescoping of both sounds and ideas is another way to create new words. "Worlds of wanwood leafmeal lie"* contains two such words. "Wanwood" has in it the ideas of colorless and dark and suggests the sound and idea of wormwood. "Leafmeal" telescopes seasons into one image — from leaf to crumbled fertilizer.

These are highly sophisticated games, but they are played by good writers. Your students will enjoy attempting them, at least, and they should be very good at the language-combining method of creating new words.

You and your students can learn new words and proper spelling, and enjoy word handling through the use of commercial word games. The game racks seem to sport new word games every Christmas. Scrabble you know, of course. Try Royalty (S. J. Miller Co., P. O.

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*Gerard Manley Hopkins

Box 130, Coney Station, Brooklyn, New York 10024). This is a game that usually sends students to the dictionary and, there they sit, looking up words while the game languishes on the table before them.

Other word games abound on the shelves of your all-purpose drugstore or stationery shop and, undoubtedly new ones will keep appearing. Watch for them and try them out with your students. Don't be deluded into thinking that students learn as a result of being told, or that, to do any good, medicine must taste bad. Learning can be fun and certainly takes place faster if it is fun.

A simplified form of classroom "Password" can be adapted from the television game with no equipment other than a blackboard or a good memory for keeping score. Divide a class, select one from each side to go out while a word is being decided on, and practice one-word definitions from first one side and then the other until one representative wins for his side. A word guessed on the first clue counts for 10 points, on the second clue 9, and so on. No score for either side and a new word is chosen if the count runs downhill to 0.

"Password" helps students increase their vocabularies. It helps with specific word meanings and also helps with connotations of words, since a clue can be, not a synonym, but any word that suggests the target word. It helps students to a fun-with-words attitude which all writers should enjoy.

A classroom game can be useful in the area of helping students recognize the difference between denoted and connoted, (fact and feeling) word associations. The rules should fit your classroom situation and can be as simple as a list of words written on the board by the teacher and students asked to divide a sheet of paper down the middle. To head the left column, they are to write FACT and above the right column, FEELING. In the columns, students write both kinds of definitions.

This game can be more complex and more helpful, if you have students give dictionary definitions orally and discuss whether a word makes them feel elated, hungry, sad, proud, disgusted, or whatever. Then, let them try to find a word with a similar dictionary definition and opposite connotations. This works best with the words contained in simple sentences. For example: "She barged into the room." The connotation is: Like an elephant in a pansy bed.

But when we change the verb that means "entered," we can immediately bring to a reader any number of different and even opposite images. "She tripped into the room." "She pranced into the room." "She ambled into the room." "She slithered into the room." "She edged into the room."

Any and all of the examples are to be preferred over "She entered the room" which is completely neutral and non-connotative and, therefore, carries no image to the reader. He can't possibly see her enter, and yet, with the same number of words (one, in this case) the writer can and should draw a picture. What kind of picture is up to him and he should be very sure that it draws the picture he intends (or the one that serves his purpose).

If the author wants his reader to like "her," he probably will not have her barge into a room. Barging is for battle axes or domineering women and we don't, in general, pick them for our heroines. If "she" is shy, the author can and should show her slinking or edging into a room. The reader will supply the connotation "shy," and the author will not be put in the amateur's role of telling his reader that the girl is shy. The good writer shows her being shy, the reader sees her that way and instantly believes what the author intended for him to believe.

Another essential word study for a writer has to do with generalizations and specifics. Someone has said, "A generalization is a plateau where a tired mind rests." While an occasional generalization is good and necessary, the mark of an amateur writer is vagueness. Vagueness is usually found in the grey, upper atmosphere of generalization. Up there, the reader sees no outlines of sizes and shapes, he sees no color, he hears no quarter notes or trills, he tastes no pepper, never feels the sting of sleet on his cheeks.

Students enjoy climbing or descending ladders of abstraction or generalization. The word play can move in either direction, up or down. Start with a specific object at the bottom of the ladder and add words slightly broader and more general on each rung of the ladder until you bump your head on the flat, spread-out abstraction of each word's ceiling.

READ MAGAZINE for March 1, 1969 contained excellent help with this problem of writers. In an article titled "Let's Get Specific," the authors show, on color bands, a detailed picture of a particular Corvette (a picture a writer can show in words), then they move up toward grey with: "my orange Corvette," "car," "motor vehicle," "land transportation," and finally "transportation." As an example, they write from the top band (as many beginning writers do), and produce the sentence, "I got into my transportation, and drove it away toward town."

From that sentence, it is impossible to see any image because the reader does not know whether to picture a motor boat, a plane, a tank, or a pickup. Everyone who wants to write well must learn that generalizations are bound to sneak into most first drafts. He must train himself to recognize these and mark them for revision. Revising then is as simple as placing one foot after the other down the rungs of the ladder until he himself sees (hears, tastes, feels, smells) the specific object and gives that, instead of the abstraction, to his reader.

Aids for building vocabulary are to be found everywhere. THE READER'S DIGEST carries two features regularly that students should see: "It Pays to Increase Your Word Power" and "Toward More Picturesque Speech." If you use the school edition of this magazine, additional helps are offered.

The writings of Indian and Eskimo students are frequently somewhat "thin" in that many of them have done little reading in the classics and they, therefore, cannot enrich their own words through the use of literary allusions. At the same time we all know that we can lead a student to a book, but we can't make him read. Sometimes we can lure him to read and often we can see to it that he receives the training and/or the glasses that make reading more comfortable for him. We can place books and magazines in his way so he can hardly pass without stumbling over them. This is something that many of our students have never known in the home. A reading center (or corner) in a classroom is invaluable, provided it is kept up to date and attractive.

A teacher who loves to read can spread the virus through his classroom, simply by talking with enthusiasm about what he is reading — show and tell, usually. School librarians plead for what-to-buy suggestions. Help them. Lend your own books. They collect less dust, if they are being read. You will lose one occasionally, but you can write it off your income tax as a professional expense.

Word origins, often fascinating, serve also as an aid to remembering both words and meanings. Search for these, keep your own notebook, and let students in on the fun whenever you have occasion to use a word with an interesting family tree. Television and radio programs have, from time to time, featured words as the stars of the show. Some of these are still to be found new or as reruns. See your local listings. Some have spawned books such as those by Bergen Evans. See the Scholastic magazine, PRACTICAL ENGLISH, especially the March 21, 1969 number.

Stock your classroom with aids to word usage and be sure that all students know how to use them. These should include: an up-to-date unabridged dictionary, a Thesaurus (or several inexpensive paperback copies), small dictionaries from a variety of editors, possibly a rhyming dictionary for its interest although certainly not a necessity, and as available, dictionaries of native languages such as the Wall-Morgan, "Navajo-English Dictionary")Publications Service, Haskell, Institute - $1.00).

VII

THE TEACHING OF POETRY

One difficulty that seems to underlie all aspects of classroom work with poetry is the range of false conceptions of what poetry is and what it is supposed to do. Until this is adequately discussed it is impossible to indicate the educational direction which teachers might attempt to pursue with their pupils. This must sound too obvious but poetry does not lend itself to easy definition. It resists being encompassed by the kind of exact phrases that are adequate to the definition of the measurable and quantitative things that are the material of the scientist's investigation.

Poetry is like life in that it remains too complex and multiple to stand easy analysis. This is appropriate in that, perhaps more than any other of the arts, it is closest to life experience, using as it does the verbal tools of every day speech but alchemizing them into something deeply significant, just as life too can change the banal of daily event into the source of great intensity of reaction and feeling.

The problem really rests, not so much on our doubts as to what poetry is, but more significantly, on our false conventional assumptions that have left us convinced that we do know what poetry is but in a way that proves clearly limited and fallacious.

Most students have inherited the common ignorance of poetry which anyway is not very highly regarded in our society. It is too often seen as something very specialized and highbrow rather than an intimate and important part of every day life as it has been found in so many other societies. Perhaps in students (or, even more likely, in teachers) there is not only a general ignorance but also even some measure of doubt merging into disapproval of poetry as either effete or, more generally, irrelevent. Thus we often start with poetry, not only at the beginning as in many subjects, but even a little retarded by the predisposition to underestimate its significant worth. Perhaps then a teacher has to begin with what may amount to remedial work, to correct attitudes which would be totally antipathetic to her real job of teaching poetry.

What kind of response does one get as one searches for the usual expectations of poetry readers? Most responses will reveal the expectation that poetry can be recognized by its structural form or by its content. The result is a mechanical and totally inaccurate measure of poetry. A commonplace assertion is that poetry rhymes and its lines are marked by a regularity of rhythm — the iambic of English blank verse is likely to be best remembered or recognized. This very partial estimate does in fact fit a great deal of the poetry that is proffered in the English literature class. But it does obviously mistake form for essence. Thus, instead of seeing form as a function of poetry, poetry would seem to be at the service of form. One has to announce that there is a great deal of poetry that does not rhyme and much that has no rhythm, at least in the manner of the regular feet of nineteenth century verse.

This might also be a useful occasion to suggest the great limitation and ethnocentrism of our very conception of poetry. Few countries and periods have demanded this particular structure, as one can see by noting the forms considered appropriate in other periods and places such as the stress rhythms and repetitions of early English Beowulf or the rigorous but different rhythmic forms of the Eastern Haiku. Probably one can best make this issue obvious by writing on the board a piece of definite doggeral that does, on the face of it, obey all the rules and yet most ostentatiously exhibits their inadequacy as a measure of poetry. One of the bits I like for this purpose is the famous Valentine Day sentiment of autograph books:

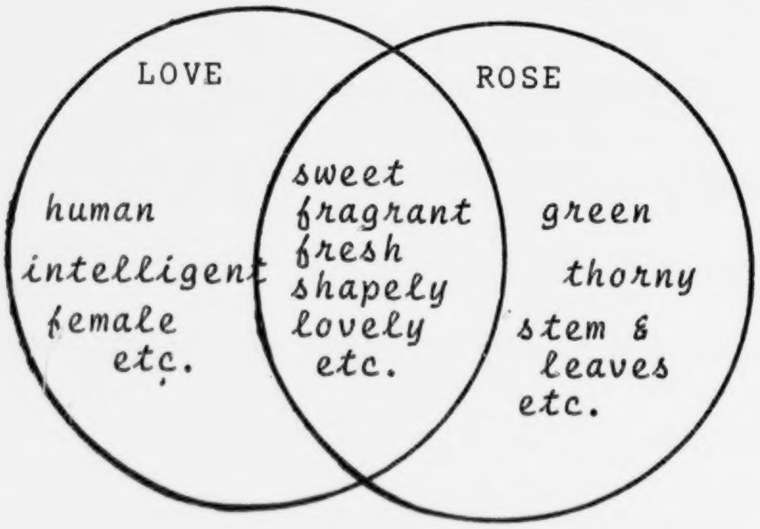
> Roses are red
> Violets are blue
> Sugar is sweet
> And so are you.

Many other verses would do. The only necessity is to make one's selection for demonstration so unutterably bad that the response is not confused by any anxious student who affects to find some virtue in the style or sentiments of the lines. Lines such as those above are also helpful in that they are useful when one gets to the point of describing what poetry really is.

Clearly poetry is found in what is said in the lines, and, granted that the form and the content are inseparable, the very manner and words in which it is expressed. And so one comes round to the provocatively worded question in John Ciardi's book titled HOW DOES A POEM MEAN? (Not, one notices, what, but how.) Here a teacher should get to a discussion of the forms of the so-called poetic image usually found as metaphors or similes and a discussion and example of these two forms makes a necessary beginning.

The simile form with its "like" or "as" introduction may in one sense be seen as an extended metaphor with the implied comparison of the metaphor actually indicated. The metaphor is not specifically MORE poetic than the simile and yet if, as one argues later, the essence of poetry is the great compression it brings to ideas and feelings, it does have certain effects not matched by the full simile structure.

One of the most famous similes in English poetry is that of Robert Burns in which he likens his love to a beautiful rose: "O, my Luve's like a red red rose / That's newly sprung in June." Such a simile allows one to teach the basic aspect of such a comparison — that it is partial and selective. In other words, the thing can never exactly be that with which it is compared, but some elements of the two totally different things may be seen to have common characteristics. To demonstrate this diagramatically we might draw a pair of circles to represent the two parts of the simile. These overlap in the area where there are identities and remain, in other aspects, separate from each other.


LOVE
ROSE
human
intelligent
female
etc.
sweet
fragrant
fresh
shapely
lovely
etc.
green
thorny
stem &
leaves
etc.

"My Luve" in the example is both like and very unlike the rose. She is not rooted, tall, green and spiky with open petals. She is like it in perfection of class, softness to the touch, sweet scent, coming to sudden perfect flower, etc. Here then is the root of the poetic technique that it finds identity in apparent diversity, seeking to find an analogy between two things -- what T. S. Eliot has called "the objective correlative" for experience. The phrase is rather pompous and perhaps we can put the issue in simpler terms.

Poetry in essence is the communication of an experience that has seemed significant and valuable to the poet. How does he communicate this experience since, by definition, all experiences are individual and private.— no matter that they are experiences which are in generality common to all of mankind. By this I mean that we all are able to experience love, grief, etc., but that our experience is a personal and not a general one and is different from other people's reactions under the same conditions. A poet seeks some equivalent of his feelings and reactions that will make them known to others and he attempts this through the medium of an analogy.

Here then is the essential characteristic of poetry. It finds words that communicate a special feeling and the degree to which that is successful is the distinction between good and poor poetry. There has to be some mutual currency of understanding between what the poet has experienced and what the reader already knows so that the reader may be guided into an understanding of the poet's vision.

In the very simple case of Burns above, he alone knows what his love looks like, and what he thinks of her. The reader knows what a beautiful fresh rose looks like and can therefore see how the poet regards his love. This so-called "poetic image" becomes the key to our understanding and particularly so when the image is an unexpected or surprising one.

One of Carl Sandburg's most famous metaphors makes an analogy between the fog and a cat: "The fog comes on little cat feet, etc." Such a comparison causes surprise which is often the basis for a type of poetic experience because we are held by the unexpectedness, then later, inspection allows us to see the especial appropriateness of it. If the image has no initial impact it must be weak. Sometimes the impact is all that there is, and such attempts as "the lobster sky" would be considered unsuccessful because consideration brings to mind the too literal reaction of the vision with all its attendant absurdities of claws and whiskers in the heavens — far beyond the mere pink coloration that might have been intended by the unfortunate poet.

In the case of Sandburg, on the other hand, various aspects of the unexpected comparison are seen to be appropriate. There is the dark softness of the cat, the silent way it creeps up without warning, perhaps even the slight threat of its feline danger. Besides this, there is the tactile sense of soft fluffiness and perhaps, too, the dark color. The associations of the image may be pressed more widely and perhaps the depth and quality of the image may be discovered in the range of similar associations, sensual and emotional, it can convey to us.

Since our awareness and perception of the world and experience involve many of our senses and reactions, so too should the best poetry as it tells of a new experience. It is important to realize that this newness is not novelty. We know the experience of pain or young love or despair. The verbal statement by the poet grants us a sense of recognition. Although we would not previously have been able to articulate our experience, the words of the poet allow us to say "Yes, this is just what it was like and now I see it better than in my own incohate experience when I first met with this."

This discussion has all been rather general but it may indicate — just by what is does NOT say (the conventional arguments about rhyme schemes and meter) where the stress should fall. This will allow the teacher to understand that poetry is something which aims to expand the self-recognition of the student, to indicate to him the way in which he has access to this immense and wide culture that literature provides.

In this manner the teaching of poetry ceases to be an isolated, and therefore rather drab, subject. It rather becomes part of a much wider development of the student's feeling and reactions which make after all the basis for all education properly understood. The choice of the actual poems taught becomes very important and perhaps many of the great old classics of traditional courses will not be interesting or effective.

It may even be that the lines of a Rod McKuen or a Dylan song will achieve the educational effect sought better than a Wordsworth lament over those ubiquitous daffodils. When the direction has been established and the intention of the teacher is clear other issues such as selection and method of immediate class presentation become less complex for they are directed towards an understood goal of the student's interest.

VIII

THE WRITING OF POETRY

The sequence by which it seems best to encourage the writing of poetry matches very closely with the implicit hierarchy discussed in the section on teaching of poetry. That is, the emphasis has to be on ideas and feelings and their communication, not upon the mere mechanics of versification.

Firstly, it should be obvious that although there is nothing wrong with rhymes as such, they should well be avoided at first. Granted the usual limitations of vocabulary skill — let alone lack of familiarity with poetic stress — it is as well to discourage rhyme initially. Failure to do this makes rhyme the chief target of the young, would-be poet and demonstrably this will sadly dictate what he has to say. Once the search is for a rhyming word, not only will there be an attempt to set the sentiment into the strait jacket of the selected word, but there will be even further restriction. Certain words seem to cry out for the standard and repetitive rhyme of the all but burlesque: You needs a blue, or June needs a moon at this banal level.

This is not to say that rhyme is in itself old-fashioned or pointless -- consider the immense effectiveness with which it is handled by W. B. Yeats, or the way Wilfred Owen utilizes that para-rhyme or partial rhyme of his in such an effective way. It is simply that rhyme, like every other device in versification, is simply a tool and tools are only effective as they are used. When a young writer has a sufficient sense of what he wishes to achieve, and recognizes that in such a situation just this sort of rhyme will clinch his statement and make it more effective, then it will be responsibly and effectively used, as in the following affectionate couplet: "A ring is round it has no end / Just like my love for you, my friend." When he pre-devises a rhyme and seeks for another word to make the pair, the result will be bad.

The assertion, "I have written a poem," when the only evidence is a series of pointless sentiments hindered by a terminal and usually end-stopped rhyme which becomes heavily emphasized is useless. Such writing offers nothing of value either in general educational purpose or in indicating the first steps from which more competent and sophisticated writing might develop. Such verse is as end-stopped in its literary potential as in its versified structure.

Some teachers may feel with some justice that this is too open a format and that any lines of observations may in this way be argued as poetry. There is some justice in this and in many preliminary lessons it may well be that the Haiku or the cinquain forms are ideal. These two structures impress their own fairly strict order upon words; imposing a format much more rigorous than mere free verse. Yet the fact that their formats are completely unusual and unexpected when measured against the accepted styles of verse writing makes them extra valuable. Such structures demand a very extensive rethinking of what poetry is — and this is in itself a valuable freeing of the inhibiting expectations. Yet it does demand a very specialized control of words, their especially poetic order and usage, and thus escape from the other dangerous extreme to excessive formalism, the assumption that any writing suitably chopped up into irregular lines constitutes adequate poetry.

Probably the best and most necessary emphasis of a teacher must be upon what the student has experienced.

What did you actually see? Or feel? To this end sensory training is very valuable; forcing the student to look intently at a single object, making him aware of texture, scent, form, taste. Even if there were no poetic writing to come, such an experiment is valuable because it indicates the variety with which a young student can perceive the elements of his world when he gives his full attention to it. This reveals overlooked and unsuspected elements in his own awareness and nature even if the next step — finding the verbal equivalent of such an activity — for the moment escapes him.

In this crucial step -- from experience to words -- again the essential element is to guide the student toward the image, toward the analogy which he finds, clarifies, and exemplifies his fresh experience. Sometimes the student will see things in terms of stock phrases and reaction. Too many will inevitably find snow woolly or cottony. Perhaps here the most effective method of guidance is not so much to insist on the second-hand nature of the phrase — after all its very durability is some measure of its effectiveness in the popular response. Also, it is possibly original with the student. It is if he happens not to have read or heard it.

Perhaps the teacher's comment should be centered on the limitations and inadequacies of such a phrase. After all, snow may appear like a cottony blanket but then personal experience has shown that this purely visual concept is not enough. Those who have seen snow will recognize that it is cold, wet, damp, not a bit like the comforting picture of the blanket. Doesn't this suggest something; a valuable paradox in this experience? Snow looks warm and comforting but it is also savage and threatening. Such a reaction requires a rethinking of the experience in fresh terms, not those of second-hand words.

George Orwell once remarked that in writing the essential thing was to avoid, as long as possible, thinking in words. If the words came first the experience would always be expressed in a dishonest and inaccurate way imposed by the pre-selected words. If, rather, at first, the vision was exactly and appropriately established in the mind, then the effort to describe it exactly would demand the search for fresh new terminology, because the vision itself would now be individual and special, not general and second-hand.

Individual and specific are perhaps the two most appropriate terms that can be applied to the targets in the creation of new poetry, for here the vision will be created as fresh and new and personal. All this is valuable and indeed essential. The only qualification will come from the other extreme where the phrase it too idiosyncratic and personal.

A line like "the leaves looked like my aunt," is not very valuable. Even if there is subsequent private explanation that "my aunt usually dresses in red and thus when I see the brilliant red of the fall leaves I think of her," the vision remains entirely private. This would not be in itself bad, except that one can assert that whatever private pleasure the writing of poetry might yield, it is, by definition the means of communication to others and so the line between the private and the universal must be clearly perceived.

On the other hand the phrase, "The dry leaf crackled like bacon frying," is sufficiently a universal experience that it does mean something. One might then go on to argue that what it means is very little; that in making the comparison solely at the aural level it ignores all the conflicts at other levels, the leaves don't smell, can't be eaten, etc. But here is a debate about the limited effectiveness of an image not an indication that it is too obvious or inaccurate.

With devices such as this a teacher is effectively directing her student towards an important sensitivity to his world and towards a recognition of how language works and how effective its devices can be. In this way the efforts to create actual poetry may be a very small part of what is to be achieved in creative writing classes. Such periods take on a value far greater even than the opportunities to find writing of publishable quality.

IX

BUILDING BLOCKS FOR PROSE WRITING

Just as hogans, teepees, mansions, and skyscrapers are made up of rooms, so are most forms of prose writing today made up of scenes. The rooms in buildings for a thousand purposes may stand alone, but are often connected by doors, hallways, arches, stairways, or elevators. It is the same with scenes. If this sounds, at first, like some vague generalization or else too easy, it isn't.

The Scene* is a literary form made up of five logical steps. To write a good scene requires a great deal of know-how and practice. However, once a student has mastered the form, he can use it for writing short stories, plays, novels, legends, opinion pieces or essays, how-to articles, personal letters, book reviews, term papers —

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* The Scene as I give it here is not my personal discovery. I learned it from Professor Walter Campbell at the University of Oklahoma, founder of the writing program there and a truly great and successful author and teacher. According to him, he was never able to sell a short story until he discovered and began to use this Scene pattern.

in short, for any kind of prose writing that depends for effect on enlisting the interest of a reader. We shall use the word "story" interchangeably with prose writing. In today's literary market almost all prose writing is developed in terms of characters, problem solving and cause-and-effect action.

The five steps of The Scene should be explained and illustrated in class. Students should find Scenes in magazine stories and articles and should number each of the five steps. Read Scenes in class. Act them out. These exercises should be repeated and repeated until no student can ever again sit down to read without immediately recognizing the steps in the Scenes he comes across. He should be aware of Scenes he witnesses between students in the dormitory, between brothers and sisters in the home, between teachers and students in the classroom, between players on the gridiron. Scenes and their connecting links make up our lives. The rules of writing are not true because the ancient Greek writers said so, but because human beings act and interact in certain predictable ways. The writer must be a student of human nature.

In outline, these are the five steps in a Scene:

1. **MEETING - between two or more persons, a person and an animal, or a person and a force of nature + variations of these.**
    - a. **Time**
    - b. **Place or setting**
2. **PURPOSE - one or more characters in the meeting must have a purpose which is made clear to the reader. Best when Cross-Purpose.**
3. **ENCOUNTER - character with the purpose attempts to accomplish it on one or all of these levels.**
    - a. **Intellectual**
        - (1) **Characters may give information**
        - (2) **Characters may get information**
        - (3) **Characters may argue**
    - b. **Emotional**
        - (1) **Characters may seek to impress**
        - (2) **Characters may seek to persuade**
    - c. **Physical - the character with the purpose, takes what he wants by force.**
4. **FINAL ACT - in which the character with a purpose can**
    - a. **Win,**
    - b. **Lose, or**
    - c. **Draw**
5. **SEQUEL**
    - a. **New state of mind.**
    - b. **New state of affairs.**
    - c. **Connecting link to upcoming Scene.**

Now, let us consider each of these steps in ways you, the teacher, can use to present them to your students.

THE SCENE - MEETING

Until two characters meet, reader interest is apt to be low. One character alone can sit and think or, as the old joke goes, sometimes he just sits. In either case, an observer (a reader) can't see much going on and he has nothing to root for so his energies are not in any way engaged. However, he will read long enough to find out whether anything is about to happen. During the time he is reading for this purpose, the writer must keep him comfortable and, in order to be comfortable, he needs to know:

1. Where he is, and
2. What time it is.

All good writers put a reader at ease by placing him in a specific setting and by indicating whether he is expected to imagine himself back in time to 1776 or forward to 1984 or merely to last night or to tomorrow morning.

As readers, we are so accustomed to this that we may not be aware of its mechanics, but writers know the necessity of putting a reader immediately at ease. They know he will feel bewildered and lost unless he can locate himself in time and space.

A story as simple as, "Pat and Mike met on the street one morning and Pat said, . . . " contains the necessary orientation -- street and morning. Given only that much, the reader or listener imagines a street for himself and sees the morning sun slanting down on the two characters walking toward each other, coming together in front of a store perhaps, and stopping to talk. He doesn't have to worry about where and when Pat and Mike met. He can now give his attention to listening to what they have to say.

If the time and place are important to the outcome of the story, the writer must show the reader a particular street and, perhaps, a wet, grey morning with trees bent low before a gale wind. If nothing much depends on the time or setting, the writer may give his reader a bare hint and allow him to imagine his own street and morning. He should never leave the reader completely up in the air at some vague time in some indefinite place. If he does, the reader is very likely to feel so uncomfortable that he will throw the story down in disgust.

Whenever possible, during The Meeting and during every other Scene Step, keep the story moving while giving the reader necessary information. This is not always easy, but the author who is aware of the need can soon learn the tricks of doing it and set up habits of writing in this active, ongoing way.

THE SCENE - PURPOSE

At least one character in a story must have a problem and he must urgently need to solve that problem when the story starts. (The urgency would be minimal, of course, in the case of an article on How to Catch Fish in a Dry Lake — unless the angler were starving. However, for our purposes, we can still claim that all prose pieces of writing do present a problem.) The Purpose, then, is to solve the problem.

The problem can call for either a mental or a physical solution. If the problem requires a mental solution — that is, if the character can solve the problem by making up his mind — we are dealing with a story of decision. If the problem requires a physical solution — that is, a change in conditions — then we are dealing with a story of achievement.

It is essential that the reader know exactly and very soon after he starts to read what the character, or characters, are setting out to do — the precise, narrowed-down Purpose.

The reader needs to know whether a character's Purpose is to make up his mind to take the job in Istanbul or turn it down, or whether he must make changes in his way of living in order to clear his good name and marry the girl he loves. In the first case, this is a story of decision. In the second, the character must change conditions in order to marry the girl which is his Purpose.

In both cases, the reader must know the character's Purpose. If he can be told the Purpose without stopping the story the reader will enjoy finding out the Purpose. If the author is not skillful enough to give the Purpose without stopping the story, poor writers do get by with this and the Purpose must be made clear to the reader in one way or another.

Example of stopping to tell the reader:

> Harry knew that Evelyn would never marry him as long as he lived way out there in the country in that house that had running water only when it rained. The fact remained, Evelyn was the only girl in the world for him.

Example of getting on with the story while showing the reader the character's Purpose:

> "I'm sorry, Harry," Evelyn said and her voice sounded as if she really meant it, "but I'm a city girl. It's all I know."

> Harry let her hand go and drew back. They'd been through all that a dozen times. "You know there's no market for the farm right now. If we lived there and fixed up the house a little -- I could repair the roof so it wouldn't leak -- and, if I painted the barn -- "
>
> "It just won't work out, Harry. We'd be a year fixing up that place and then five years and ten. I do love you, I admit, but when I get married, I want to live, right off, not wait ten years to start living."

Dialogue is, perhaps, the easiest way of giving Purpose while getting on with the story. However, nobody is concerned about an author having an easy time. Too much dialogue in a story or article is the mark of a lazy or amateur author. So, let's try it another way that requires far less space than dialogue.

Example:

> Grey dust plumed out behind and billowed into his face as Harry gunned his rusty old cycle down the country road toward town and Evelyn. By gee, they could have a good life together even while they fixed up his old farmhouse and somehow he had to make her see it.

Cross-Purposes are implied in the example and Cross-Purpose is always more interesting than mere purpose. You have Cross-Purpose in a Scene when two or more characters each have a purpose and one cannot accomplish his purpose without the other necessarily failing to accomplish his purpose.

This is not as complicated as it sounds. For example: If Harry accomplishes his purpose of marrying Evelyn and taking her to the farm, she must give up her purpose of remaining a city girl.

If one character purposes to kill another character, the second one undoubtedly purposes to stay alive. If one wins, the other loses.

When Cross-Purpose is made clear in your Scene or story, the reader will take sides. He will be rooting for one character or the other, pulling for his favorite to win. This is a sure-fire way to keep a reader interested — enlist his backing for a character who can possibly win (accomplish his purpose), but who seems to be failing by letting someone else win or accomplish his purpose. This reader enlistment is always worth far more than it costs in extra planning of a Scene or Scenes.

THE SCENE - ENCOUNTER

When two or more characters meet and one or more has a specific purpose to accomplish, something is bound to happen. What happens is an Encounter and it takes place on one or all of three levels: Intellectual, Emotional, or Physical.

In an intellectual encounter, one or all of three things can happen. The character (or characters) with the Purpose can: Give information to another character, get information from another character, or two or more characters can argue.

This does not necessarily require dialogue although it often does. If you use dialogue, other ways of imparting information will probably be present and useful to the author.

Please see READ MAGAZINE, Vol. XIX, No. 1, Sept. 1, 1969, p. 22 ff. In the article, "The Language of Non-Words" you will learn how silent language can contribute to all of your writing and will certainly be effective when you write the Scene - Encounter.

One good example in this article describes two people approaching each other on a sidewalk. When they get near, both step aside and lower their eyes. What information is given in this brief encounter? The observer knows: 1. That they don't know each other, or 2. That they are deliberately avoiding each other. If this encounter occurred in an ongoing story, the reader would know whether these two are acquainted, so he would know, without question, that they are avoiding each other and the author has shown the reader rather than telling him — always the more effective way because showing provides the reader with an image, while telling may make no specific impression.

Gestures or hand language and body attitudes, clothing, and unconscious reactions such as blushing or perspiring — all of these are ways of conveying information without actually using dialogue. These, plus the exact words of characters (dialogue), all have a place in the Scene - Encounter.

For example:

> Suppose Tom Begay and Kee Yazzie meet on the bridge in Gallup. Mr. Begay asks Mr. Yazzie for information, inquiring, "Where did my son go?"
>
> Mr. Yazzie may answer in many ways — all depending on his Purpose. He may say, "Up toward the Post Office." This is a word answer in which the words denote their dictionary meaning.
>
> If that is all he answers, both the reader and Mr. Begay would probably start looking up the street for the boy. However, suppose that after he gives that information, he pokes out his lower lip and tips his head back over his shoulder in the opposite direction from the Post Office.
>
> In that case, the reader and Kee Yazzie would know that Tom Begay was afraid of his words being overheard. He still wanted to give the correct information to the boy's father, but he didn't want to be caught tattling on the boy.

In which direction do you think Mr. Begay would move to find his son? Obviously, in this case, the non-word gesture would give him more information than did the words. It would also make a stronger impression than the words on the reader.

Now suppose that when Tom Begay asks Kee Yazzie about the boy, Mr. Yazzie answers, "Over behind the hoskitti."

The reader might or might not understand Mr. Yazzie's meaning immediately, but Mr. Begay would know that Mr. Yazzie was really saying, "It's none of your business." These are words that have a connoted meaning different from their denoted or dictionary meaning. In order to understand, the reader must be given additional information and this, too, can be given in words or in action.

If Mr. Begay's face turns red and he grabs Mr. Yazzie around the throat to choke the information out of him, the reader will immediately know that Mr. Yazzie's words were an evasive answer and that he was protecting the boy, probably in something the father wouldn't want him doing.

Choking, of course, is out of the realm of the intellectual, and into the third way an encounter can develop, namely, the physical. However, it would be possible for our two Navajos to keep this on the intellectual level and to argue.

For example:

"I don't know where he went."

"I'm sure you do know. You're just trying to keep it from me."

"I tell you, I don't know."

"But you were with him. He must have said something."

"He didn't say anything."

"But you know which direction he went."

"I don't remember."

"You couldn't forget in five minutes."

"I wasn't looking."

This argument could very well lead our two characters onto the emotional level of the Scene - Encounter.

Remember that the character with the Purpose is seeking to accomplish his purpose. In this case, Mr. Begay's purpose is to find his son. He has given the information to Mr. Yazzie that this is his purpose. He has asked information from Mr. Yazzie, and they have argued. Now, he still hasn't found his son so he needs to do something more. He can do one of two things: 1. He can try to impress Mr. Yazzie by making himself very important, or 2. He can play on Mr. Yazzie's emotions and try to persuade him to help him find his son. Mr. Begay does one or both of these in this way:

1. The character with the purpose may seek to accomplish his purpose by impressing one or more other characters of the importance of his purpose or of his own personal importance, thus implying "If you don't help me, I'm in a position to make you sorry."

How could Mr. Begay pursue his purpose on this level?

> He might say, "Yazzie, I'm representing our district on the Tribal Council. If you don't tell me what you know about my son, you'll be sorry."
>
> Or he might say, "Kee Yazzie, you said you'd be responsible for my son if I let him come to Gallup with you. I'll never trust you again."
>
> Or he might simply pull himself up to his full height, turn on his heel, and stride away. In this way he would imply, "I'm too dignified to lower myself by begging for information about my son."

Still, there is another way for Mr. Begay to seek to accomplish his Purpose - Emotional.

2. The character with the purpose may seek to accomplish his purpose by appealing to the other character's emotion — make him feel sorry, make him feel obligated, make him feel that his own happiness is at stake, make him feel ashamed, etc.

> How could Mr. Begay pursue his purpose at this level?
>
> He might lower his voice or even wipe a tear from his eye and say, "Look, old friend, I need your help. That boy is as precious to me as your own little Betty Chee is to you. I'm worried about him. There are too many drunks in town tonight. Something bad could happen to my boy. You know how it is, my dear friend."

> Or he might say, "Cousin, my wife will kill me when I get home, if that boy isn't with me. You know what kind of spot I'm in. Your wife is just like my wife -- crazy with worry about our kids."
>
> Or he might play on the idea of fatherhood which has almost as much appeal as motherhood. "Kee, I'm the boy's father. I love him more than anyone or anything in the world. If anything happens to that boy when I'm responsible for him, I'll kill myself."

Finally, the character with the purpose may try to achieve his purpose by physical force. Using our same example, Tom Begay might, in desperation, grab Kee Yazzie by the arm and force him to go along and look all over town for the boy. Or, he can knock Kee down and hold a knife at his throat until he tells all he knows about the boy's whereabouts.

THE SCENE - FINAL ACT

At this point in the scene, the character with the Purpose can:

1. Win - accomplish his purpose, or
2. Lose - fail to accomplish his purpose, or
3. Draw - give up (at least for the present) or change his purpose.

By some decisive act, the reader must know that the action of this scene is finished. This often happens when the character with the purpose leaves the scene, as the winner, as the loser, or with the matter in a tie.

When Tom Begay walks off the bridge, this scene is almost over. He may very well have another scene with his boy, when he finds him, but that one will start with a new meeting, new purposes, and a new encounter — another building block.

The Final Act is usually physical but it can very well have other elements in it. Tom Begay could get tired of all this and decide, "That boy is a senior in high school and big enough to be responsible for his own actions. I'm not going to worry about him another minute."

This would be an intellectual and emotional decision (which he probably couldn't keep), but it would be symbolized by a Final Act such as walking off the bridge. When the scene breaks up, this is the Final Act. It is not the end of the Scene, however, and many amateur writers think it is.

THE SCENE - SEQUEL

This means, What are the results for the story of the Scene we've just been through? Unless we are talking about the last scene in a story, the Sequel provides the reader with the logical consequences of what has happened in the Scene. (Occasionally, the author can assume that the reader will understand the consequences without having them spelled out for him, but usually he needs to be told.)

All Sequels except that of the last Scene make clear:

1. The new state of mind of the character with the Purpose,
2. The new state of affairs resulting from the Encounter, and
3. A connecting link between the Scene just cut off with a Final Act and another scene about to open with a new Meeting in a new time and place, a new Purpose, and a new Encounter.

The kind of Sequel, obviously, depends on what happened in the Scene. Suppose we say that, for a bit of violent fun, Tom Begay choked Kee Yazzie until he was unconscious.

The new state of affairs is:

1. Kee Yazzie is lying on the bridge instead of standing on the bridge.

2. Tom Begay has fixed it so he can't possibly learn from Mr. Yazzie where his son is.

3. Tom Begay whose son may be in danger has now put himself in danger. The police will be after him and that will make it even harder than before for him to find his son.

The new state of mind is:

1. Tom knows he has done wrong and he looks down at his friend and is ashamed.

2. Tom is worried now about where he will get information concerning his son. He knew that Kee Yazzie knew where the boy was, but who else knows?

The connecting links between this Scene and the next are:

1. Tom must find somebody else who knows about his son, or
2. He must search the town and find him with no help from anybody, or
3. He must find a place to hide until all of this blows over, or
4. All the other possible courses he can pursue.

The Scene that follows can involve a meeting between Tom and the police, a meeting between Tom and his son, a meeting between Tom and his wife, a meeting between Tom and a violent rain storm, a new meeting between Tom and Kee Yazzie in which Tom tries to get rid of the evidence of what he has done and this delays him too long for him to keep his son out of trouble . . .

Here we see the basic pattern for planning (plotting, if you prefer) a story that will hold a reader's interest — WHATEVER HAPPENS IN ONE SCENE CAUSES THE NEXT SCENE, MAKES IT NECESSARY.

In terms of our building blocks with which we started, the Sequel is the door of a room and it may even serve as a hallway between rooms. The reader is well trained (by his other reading) to move from scene to scene the minute the time and place of a new Scene - Meeting are indicated.

We are all accustomed to very brief Transitions:

Meanwhile, back at the ranch . . .

The next day, when he arrived at school . . .

In the early part of the sixteenth century, when Henry VIII became King of England . . .

Later that afternoon he stormed into the house . . .

She wept until he came home from work and she heard his key in the lock.

The reasons for brief Transitions between Scenes are:

1. The Scene (with its encounter and, therefore, conflict) holds a reader's interest far better than any other unit of writing. Transitions are fairly dull, even though necessary.

2. A reader gets all comfortable with a time and place (setting) and feels at home there while a Scene takes place. He doesn't enjoy having to get himself oriented in a new time and place, so the good writer (always considerate of his reader's feelings) moves him as quickly and painlessly as possible, letting him in on what he needs to know in order to understand and not be confused by the Scene to follow.

3. Transitions make variety possible. With them, we can include in one story scenes in places as different as the Blue Room of the White House and the fire pit outside a wickiup. We can range, in one story, from next year to the day the Spaniards arrived in New Mexico and found the land occupied. Without time and place transitions, we'd be stuck in one setting and we'd have to fill in everything, day and night (dull as it may be) during the times between Scenes that really tell the story.

Sometimes, it is important to a story to know that the main character rushed to the store and bought a dozen eggs, for example. If she had enough money to pay for them, she probably did not have a Scene with the storekeeper. If she went and returned without hitting a dog or Grandpa Ebenezer on the way, she probably made the trip without entering into a Scene. She may have spoken to Grandpa or patted the dog on the head. Unless these acts are to be important later for the story development or unless we need to know that she is the kind of person who loves dogs and old men, the writer probably won't tell us about it.

If, however, it is important to know that she has no food in the house and an important character in the story is coming for lunch, it does indicate to the reader a good deal about her ingenuity (and something about her guest) if he knows that she can make a spectacular omelet and that she digs money for the eggs from the bottom of her handkerchief box. Going to the store to get the eggs has now become an important cause-and-effect link in the story even though it is not developed around a Scene - Encounter involving intellectual, emotional, or physical conflict.

It has required a great deal of space to explain The Scene. It can be explained even more quickly in the classroom, but whatever the time required, it is well spent. In addition to a detailed explanation, students should be put to the task of finding fully developed Scenes in magazine stories. The stories in SCHOLASTIC, CAVALCADE, SCOPE (all published by Scholastic Magazines, 50 West 44th Street, New York 10036) and those in READ (published by American Education Publications, 55 High Street, Middletown, Conn. 06457), and any of the popular national magazines will serve class purposes in finding and analyzing scenes. Even articles are built of connected Scenes (usually called anecdotes). If possible, ask friends to save old magazines for you in order that students may cut out, paste into notebooks for themselves, and mark the steps of Scenes for study.

CAUSE AND EFFECT

These are the words to remember when planning stories. A character with an urgent purpose sets out to accomplish that purpose, and meets another character (or force) with a purpose of his own. The result of their meeting is a Scene. That scene sets up conditions (a new state of mind and a new state of affairs) that cause another scene. Whenever one scene does not cause ensuing scenes, the story line is weakened and readers are apt to drop by the wayside.

Beginning writers should wake up each morning, repeating to themselves, "Cause and effect, cause and effect, cause and effect." They should go to sleep at night, reviewing the day and connecting all that has happened into series of cause-and-effect Scenes. This is the way an author thinks.

X

BEFORE YOU START TO WRITE A STORY

The word "story" for our purposes means any and all prose writing plus ballads and epic poems that also tell of characters-in-action. That is a broader definition than can be found in most dictionaries, but the present-day style of prose writing makes the old definition out-of-date. So, for us, a "story" which can and should be planned before writing may take on the final form of a play, a novel, an epic poem, an incident reported for a newspaper, a character sketch, a legend, a joke, an essay, a television script, a how-to article, a fantasy, or what have you. So, that is what we mean by Story — the strands of characters-in-action woven together into a strong cord to which a reader can safely cling until it leads him to its end.

WHAT IS A STORY NOT?

It is not a lot of interesting happenings, typed out and clipped together.

It is not the first idea that pops into a writer's head and onto paper to be dressed up a little and palmed off as a story.

It is not an exact reporting of something that really happened. "But I know it happened just that way," does not make it a story. Photography can be art, but only when an artist composes the picture, clicks the shutter, and develops the print.

What kind of architect would say, "I have a great idea for a choir room, so I'm going to build a cathedral"? Suppose he immediately gathered up carpenters and stone masons and said, "All right, men, I don't know how the rest of it looks, but I know exactly how I want the choir room. We'll build that first and trust to luck that the rest of it will come out beautiful and awe-inspiring."

About then, somebody would be after that architect with a butterfly net. Beginning authors, however, are always trying to build stories in this way.

THE BLUEPRINT FOR A STORY

Good stories are planned in advance. Some writers put their plan on paper in outline form. Some (with sharp memories) keep their story plans in their heads. Almost all good writers change the plan somewhat as they write. Characters become real people and they have a way of speaking up when the author expected them to duck their heads and gaze at their feet. Or, in advance, it may have seemed to the author that when the bronco bucked off the hero, he would get right up and walk away. Still, when he came to writing that part of his story, the author might very well decide that this was all too easy. The hero should be really hurt and not able to walk away. The author may decide then that this changes the next two scenes even though the end of the story will remain largely as he planned it originally.

Unless a story line changes somewhat during the writing, the chance is good that we are dealing with a dull story and an unimaginative author. This does not wipe out the necessity for a blueprint. Before the author starts to write, he should know about his story:

1. The Beginning.
    a. The characters.
    b. The problem facing the characters.
    c. Time, setting, and tone.
2. The Body.
    a. The attempt or attempts of the characters to solve the main story problem.
    b. The complication with the hidden solution.

3. The End.
    a. The hidden solution that solves the problem.
    b. All loose ends are tied and the reader is satisfied.

THE BUILDER'S SPECIFICATIONS

The bare outline given above is easy to remember, but it needs to be filled in and rounded out, if students are to know how to plan their stories.

The Beginning - Characters.

Before deciding even to attempt an outline, a student should consider:

Do I know the characters well enough to write them convincingly? Most writers do not invent their characters from whole cloth. They usually piece them together from snips and snatches of real people — the eyes of one, the laugh of another, the miserliness of another, the limp of another, the sweaty palms of another. Here may be an imagined character, but he is also real because he acts and thinks as real people do.

It is well for a beginning writer to have a picture of his main character before him. If he can draw, fine. Or he may want to use the appearance of a person in a magazine picture, paste it on a page on which he lists other characteristics that he has fitted together to round out a real character.

Start characterizing the actors in a story immediately. People (readers) are interested in people. They are especially interested if they see them in action that reveals their character. The author will continue to characterize his actors all the way through a story. However, in the beginning, he should catch a reader's interest by showing his main actor in action that reveals the kind of person he is and, if possible, also shows that he is up against a hard problem.

The Beginning - The Problem.

The story problem dictates the main character's story purpose, of course. This must be made clear to the reader almost immediately and it must be a problem that the reader can care about. That is, the reader will stop reading unless he cares about the main character and really wants him to be able to solve his problem.

A good story problem (good because it makes the reader care) is one that places something of real value at stake.

Obviously, then, the best story problem is a life-and-death matter, since life is our most valuable possession. This is the reason why war stories are perennial favorites. However, it is possible to make far lesser values seem important to a reader and the ways are:

First, make the reader care about the character with the problem, and second, make the thing-at-stake of supreme importance to that character. Once this is done, the reader will take the side of the main character and will be pulling for him. When the reader cares to this extent the solution of the problem (accomplishment of the purpose) is as urgent to the reader as it is to the characters in the story.

The Beginning - Time, Setting, Tone.

Time and Tone can and should be quickly indicated in passing (that is, without stopping the characterization or the presentation of the problem) in order that the reader will know immediately that this is happening in 1861 and is to be a Civil War story with the main action taking place in a slave's cabin on an old plantation. It is just as important for the reader to know at once that he is being asked to transport himself to a Longhouse in upper Washington State for a naming ceremony in 1970. This kind of information can usually be given like a baseball pitcher's windup — on the way to introducing characters and story problem.

The settings a writer can make come to life for his reader are those the writer himself knows intimately — the swimming hole back home, the dorm room, the council lodge. Then the trick is to give only enough details to form a total image in the reader's eyes, nose, ears, etc.

In the Beginning, then, the writer is running a kind of three-ring circus and still he must not appear to be out of breath. He gives necessary information in passing, without stopping his introductions of characters and problem.

The Body - Attempts by Characters to Solve the Story Problem.

See the chapter on SCENE and present these attempts in scenes, always remembering the principle of linking scenes by Cause and Effect.

The Body - Complication with Hidden Solution.

This is not easy and is not always necessary, but in a tightly plotted story it is most desirable. Writers who look as if they are sleeping are sometimes working hard at figuring out complications with hidden solutions.

What this phrase means is this: The character, in attempting to solve the story problem, goes into action that backfires so it looks as if he has made things so much worse that he can never solve his problem. However, in accord with the law of Cause and Effect, the worsened situation actually provides a way out.

Professor Campbell used to say, "If you can't get a character out of his predicament, it is probably because you haven't made it hot enough for him."

This added complication, growing out of the character's effort to solve his problem, makes it hot enough for him that a way out will present itself.

Such complications can actually be fatal for the main characters, provided another character has been in training during all or part of the story to take over the purpose and carry on.

For example: In Scholastic SCOPE for Sept. 22, 1969, read Bruce King's play, "To Catch a Never Dream." The lead character, Dancer, in his last attempt to solve his problem, gets shot and dies, but not until another character, Cat, promises the reader (viewer) that he will carry on until he achieves Dancer's purpose.

The End - Problem Solved, Reader Satisfied.

In the example given above, and in many stories, the end of the body and the end of the story overlap. It is hard to draw a line, but that is not important anyway. The essential requirement of the end is that the reader is satisfied. He should finish reading (or leave the theater, or turn off the television) and say, "Yes, that is the way it had to be." Notice that this may not mean that the story had a "happy" ending. The reader or viewer of Bruce's play is bound to be sorry that Dancer died, but he also feels that this was inevitable because of the situation, because of the mistakes Dancer made, etc. Then, even though he is sorry, the reader knows that it will take a long time and many people to correct the long-term problem Dancer attempted to solve. Since Dancer couldn't do everything himself, he handed the torch on to the next runner. Historically, this is the way deeply imbedded social problems are solved so the story is true. The reader recognizes its truth and is satisfied.

The novel DOCTOR IN BUCKSKIN by T. D. Allen ends in a massacre, but readers are never dissatisfied with the ending. The way an author makes an ending satisfying to the reader is that he prepares for the end from the beginning. Everything that happens in the story is working toward the end.

Can you think of a better argument for planning a story before you start to write?

XI

TEACHER EXCHANGE

Teachers in classrooms, dealing with English textbooks, school schedules, and live Indians and Eskimos are, we found during the first year of the Creative Writing Project, either frustrated or stimulated by these conditions. Those who were stimulated came up with excellent ideas and plans for handling creative writing to enrich their teaching of English.

This is an open-end chapter and, ideally, it should expand until it takes over the entire manual. We certainly hope to add many more suggestions from you during our work together.

LETTER WRITING

Albuquerque Indian School, Ann Gulledge, teacher
Grade 10, 67 students in 3 groups.

Mrs. Gulledge wrote:

We studied all kinds of letters for about a week — business, friendly, formal, informal, notes, or messages of any kind. For fun, we drew names in each class and wrote each other (I put in my name, too) letters for Valentines. Rule for Valentine letter: Write good things about each other or what we like about our "name" person. Need I say, a good time was had by all?

Then I told the three groups about my idea for a letter writing project to small towns with unusual names. I gave examples such as Nome, Alaska which got its name from the surveyor's map. He wrote NAME? because he didn't know the name of the town. The printers left off the question mark and wrote Nome for the town. Other examples were used but this one seemed to get enough interest to get the project off to a good start.

Each student selected a name from alphabetical lists in the encyclopedias. (It was the first time I had realized that we have no state beginning with "B ") Then we had fun learning to use the zip code catalog.

Here is a sample of the form letter we sent out.

907 Indian School Road, N. W.
Albuquerque Indian School
Albuquerque, New Mexico 87107
Date

The Postmaster
Town, State, zip

Dear Sir:

Will you please tell me about your town?

I like the name, ____________, and I hope you will tell me stories about the name, the town's history, and news of present interest.

Please ask several people to write to me because I enjoy reading about real places. I hope to hear from elderly people as well as boys and girls near my age.

(A paragraph telling just enough about yourself to make your reader interested — the "bait your hook" idea.)

A self-addressed, stamped envelope is enclosed for your convenience. I will appreciate hearing from you soon.

Sincerely yours,

Signature

We also decided that we should "bait" the self-addressed, return envelopes. We made the envelopes and then drew pictures in color on the backs of them.

So far, we have letters from:

Bullhead City, Arizona
Ajo, Arizona
Coldwater, Michigan
Hungry Horse, Montana
Eunice, New Mexico
Tonopah, Nevada
Dry Run, Pennsylvania
Goodnight, Texas
Muleshoe, Texas
Marlboro, Vermont
Goose Egg, Wyoming
Egg Harbor, Wisconsin

We plan to make a large wall map showing names of towns and a scrapbook of all letters received.

Mrs. Gulledge comments, "This idea is great! Letters and brochures are more interesting than textbooks." And, we might add, provide excellent practice in reading, spelling, syntax, proper letter writing forms, history, geography, biography, etc. In addition, this project is bound to contribute to understanding between peoples. What more could we expect from one sleepless-night idea?

Another letter-writing project is the idea of Bonnie Neil at Intermountain. It is particularly useful with boarding school students.

Mrs. Neil gives her students paper and asks them to leave blank the top three inches of the page. Then she says, "Write a paragraph about what you did last night . . . Now write about last weekend . . . Now write about the most interesting thing you've learned at school this week."

When students have finished, she says, "All right, you have just written a letter home. Address it to your folks, add anything else you would like to tell them, and finish it properly with your signature."

ANTHOLOGIES OF STUDENT WRITINGS

Many teachers reproduce and bind anthologies of student writings. These books are useful in many ways. They recognize superior effort and can, if so selected, recognize the top effort of students who often fail to reach that level. They become selling documents when sent out into the community, to students' agencies, and to Washington. The possibility of publication provides students with strong incentive for writing and for writing well. Such books make excellent textbooks if they are used as the basis for class reading, discussion, and criticism. Finally, they are usually the most popular books in school libraries and never fail to lure reading practice.

These books can win nationwide recognition. NÁÁTSÍÍLID, the creative writing publication of Intermountain School was awarded a first place year before last by Columbia Press, and was commended last year for Layout and Indian expression in poetry. Credit is due to Clarissa B. Lowry, Ferrin L. Allen, and Alexa West along with the major credit which goes to contributing student writers.

For the first time this past year, Albuquerque Indian School had its own poetry anthology. When Ann Gulledge's students finished poems and illustrations (the latter with help from a few art students), Dr. Solon Ayers, Superintendent, managed a way to get it beautifully reproduced. The students then gave an autographing party to which they invited faculty members from the school, speakers who had talked to them about writing, and the creative writing project director. Their books and the autographs they collected from students and visitors will remain among their prized possessions for the rest of their lives. For an hour or so, they enjoyed one of the rewards of writing, namely, recognition for having written.

We recommend the collection of anthologies with the dab of whipped cream on top that caps it all off — an autographing party.

INDIVIDUAL STUDENT COLLECTIONS

To Jim White at Wingate High School go the honors for consistency and the artistic merit of books he produced for individual students. His equipment was no more sophisticated than a mimeograph and yet he managed to reproduce imaginative and beautiful covers, took great care with layout, selection of colored paper and colorful ties.

Students who finish a year of writing with one or more books, all their own and tastefully reproduced and bound, have surely been inspired to keep writing and to write up to the limits of their ability. Once such a book is in his hands, the student who wrote it is bound to have a heightened opinion of himself and thus to set new goals for himself. He has documented proof that he is somebody.

Naturally the quality of the writing in these individual books will vary. Excellent writers are few and far between. In such a book, however, a student competes with himself and has no cause to be put down by those with more practice and more ability whose work appears side-by-side with his. In some ways, the collection of writings of individuals can be expected to inspire even more and better work than the more usual class or school anthologies. Both kinds of collections are recommended.

RECORD STUDENTS READING THEIR OWN WRITINGS

Alexa West at Intermountain School sought out the help of the excellent communications department there and produced "The Sounds of Silence" — correlated words-music-pictures on tape and filmstrip.

Students who had written good poetry selected pictures from magazines or school art that illustrated their writing. These illustrations were photographed to make a filmstrip. Students then read their own poetry, music was added to the recording, and tape and film were synchronized.

Mrs. West reports that this first attempt fell short of her high expectations, but she is a bit of a perfectionist and will undoubtedly try again. The idea certainly has merit and has in it suggestions that many teachers can use even without the sophisticated equipment available at Intermountain.

Any teacher with a tape recorder will find it a valuable aid in helping students with poetry, particularly. Poetry needs to flow or else it needs intentionally to stumble. Whatever the intention, the student can tell, from recording and listening to his words, whether or not he has succeeded.

When teaching students for whom English is a second language, we have discovered that quite often they leave out key words when writing. Speaking, however, they are apt to indicate their meaning either by filling in the missing words or by inflection. A teacher who is baffled by what he finds on the paper may discover that, if the student reads and records his writing, it all comes clear. The teacher then is in a position to help get the thought on paper.

IF ALL ELSE FAILS

If students don't respond to the self-assignment starters such as Life Story and Here & Now . . .

If you, the teacher, and I, the project director, can't find anything in a student's Life Story or Here & Now experiments from which we can extract his self-assignments . . .

If you, the teacher, feel that you are shirking your duty unless you make class assignments in writing . . .

Then try making assignments such as:

1. ROLE REVERSAL

   Three full and complete characterizations of you:

   a. As if written by someone who hates you.
   b. As if written by someone who loves you.
   c. As if written by someone who couldn't care less.

   Put on the other fellow's shoes. Get inside his skin. Look out through his eyes and write about YOU -- all about what kind of person you are, the oddball things you do, your appearance, your drives, your ambitions and whether you'll attain them -- all from the three points of view.

2. RECORD at least ONE DREAM — in detail.

   Pay particular attention to setting, whether or not the dream was in color, did anything surprise you, and ESPECIALLY, what emotions were involved? Were you in the dream or outside, looking on?

3. OVERHEARD DIALOGUE

   This must be done on the spot, not remembered and recorded later. Find a place where two or more people are talking and where your taking notes won't disrupt the flow of talk. Take down exactly what is said. If you have time, add the tones of voice, gestures, etc., but don't let this distract you from recording exact words.

Do this at three different times and three different places.

Note: Spoken language differs materially from written language. It is supported by the non-verbal language of gesture, and behind it is an adjunct language of emotion. Eavesdrop! Listen! Get it down. While dialogue is not the same as speech, you must learn first to hear speech before you can write dialogue.

4. STILL STRIP

Using pictures collected from magazines and, without text, paste up a series of pictures or portions of pictures which communicate:

a. a story theme (a truth about life).
b. a single emotion.
c. a line of action that can become a story with a Beginning, Body, and End.

5. CREATIVE CONTINUUM

Consider yourself in the exact center of a contrived or imagined situation which is static. Regard Time as a button which you press to start action forward (or backward, if you prefer). Write what happens as a result of the changed circumstance you have contrived.

For example: At twelve o'clock, midnight, on December 31, 1971, earth's gravitational pull will fail. We know this in advance. What preparations will be necessary — write them in detail.

Or, pick your own time for this to happen and let it happen without warning. Describe the results.

Or, look the other way. Suppose gravitation here has never exercised any greater pull than it does on the moon until, at noon today, it changes and we and everything around us are three times heavier than usual.

Suppose all the clocks in the world suddenly stopped. Suppose death were suddenly eliminated. Suppose cars and all mobile machines decided to run backward instead of forward. Suppose money grew on trees and the only work anyone would do was gardening. Suppose all food ran out. Suppose for yourself whatever changed situation you will set in motion by pushing the Time Button and write fully all that happens.

6. INSTANT STATUS

This is not original with us and the source is lost, but our students exercise their imaginations sometimes in this way:

What is it you want to be? Artist? Lawyer? Rodeo champion? Millionaire? Educator?

Write the letter you can day-dream receiving from someone in authority. At the Institute of American Indian Arts one year, students wrote the following letters:

On stationery of the U. S. Treasury
Internal Revenue Dept.

Dear Evan:

We are sending our representative to your dormitory on Monday of next week in regard to the $256,897.73 that you owe in back income taxes.

Sincerely yours,

On stationery of Doubleday & Co., Publishers
277 Park Avenue
New York, New York

Dear Mr. Rogers:

We have read the book manuscript you submitted and would like very much to contract with you now for the right to publish every word you write for the rest of your life.

Sincerely yours,

Editor-in-Chief

On stationery of the Metropolitan Museum of Art
New York, New York

Dear Miss Backford:

We have obtained, quite by accident, several of your rough sketches and we are wondering whether you would be available to come to New York during your Christmas vacation to give a series of illustrated lectures to the art teachers who will be visiting the Metropolitan during the Christmas season.

We will, of course, pay all of your expenses and are prepared to offer you an honorarium of $25,000.

Sincerely yours,

The Curator

On stationery of Paramount Studios
Hollywood, California

Dear Mr. Lopez:

Our scout attended the recent performance of

> the Drama Department at IAIA and has recommended that we send you the enclosed seven-year acting contract. You will notice that it is drawn on a sliding scale, beginning at $100,000 per picture and reaching a ceiling at $750,000 per picture after the first year.
>
> Will you please let us hear from you at your earliest convenience as we are delaying casting six pictures for which we think you would be ideal.
>
> Cordially yours,
>
> Signature
> Head of Studio
>
> No need to think small on a project of this kind. A student can give his imagination its head and let it fly. Notice that the letterhead is important. Pick a good one and let yourself go!

Cal E. Rollins, Wingate High, has developed a beginners course in creative writing that includes many helpful suggestions for teachers. His approach is more structured than the one offered in this manual. He makes teacher-selected class assignments in excellent ways and, under certain circumstances, we feel sure that his plan will work where others fail.

In every class we have ever worked with, one, two, or three students are struck dumb by too much freedom. A few teachers participating in this project are of similar temperament. In these cases, the only way to work is through teacher-instigated assignments. The secret of drawing out good writing in this way lies in making perceptive, imaginative assignments such as those developed by Mr. Rollins.

For example:

His first assignment quotes a student's description of his own hand, asks questions to establish the point of view of the writer, the images employed, and the technique whereby the author rounded his description into a finished piece of writing. The task set for the beginning writer is an exercise in Here & Now.

Mr. Rollins continues with assignments that provide practice in the various techniques of writing. His last provides opportunity for students to practice much of what they have learned in a piece of emotional reaction. Mr. Rollins has given us permission to quote his Lesson Nineteen.

A Frozen Moment
Detroit, July 26, 1967

> Detroit. Twelfth Street. Not "And Vine" in Kansas City. But Rome Roaming populus. Milling. The mill of the gods grinds exceeding. Fine, fine ruins. Pillars and chimneys, fire-cleaned and twilight softened. Pillars of Detroit, bourgeoisie, displaced

by fire and pillaging. Every, everywhere and n'er a Nero to fiddle with it, nor fire-fighters. But black, rubber-tired furies with twirling, swirling red-amber eyes. Furious. Fighting fire with fire. All fronts demolished — concepts, crime, facade. Facing up to it and them and each other. Echo-voices, millisecond sounds, fusing into fussing over freshly-copped furnishings from the bourgeoisies noirs. Ruins not-enough-copped, providing loot for night feedings of ghetto roaches, Roman slum style.

The six o'clock family of man sits inatriumed while the sky is falling, London Bridge is, and "click" from color Rome to cartoons with "cluck-cluck" and "tsk-tsk". Flip. Afternoon editions to the crosswords. Cross words for the Romantic doublecross.

Sweet, sweet Lorraine, patriarch or matriarch, (oh sexless saint)! Uncress the ties that bind and save us, U.S., from Pompeii's end! In the beginning man created Twelfth Street in Detroit.

— Cal E. Rollins

Cal E. Rollins was impressed by what he saw of the Detroit riots, the burned buildings, the desolation, and the depression. He thought of Rome and made comparisons. One thought picks up another as in an association game. Everything is compressed and is "frozen" for the reader.

Your assignment is to write of an experience that has impressed you strongly. Pack and re-pack your words, leaving out unnecessary ones. Play the association game, but the game must have meaning for the reader. Give the reader just a wisp of what you want to say. Tantalize him. Let him draw his own conclusions. Remember one thought must follow upon another. They must interlink like a chain. The last line should link to the first line.

From Peggy Jo Hall, Sequoyah High, comes an excellent example of using a MODEL as a means of learning to write. She picked one of the truly great short stories by Stephen Vincent Benet. Miss Hall explains:

> We recently read "The Devil and Dan'l Webster" and I decided to have the students write a folk tale patterned after the devil tales:
>
> 1. person down on luck (student)
> 2. a description of the devil when he first appears to make the bargain
> 3. the effect of the bargain on the person's life, good or bad, good and bad
> 4. the return of the devil to collect
>
> They will write the story in the form of four separate themes in class. Once they leave class with them, I don't see three-fourths of the papers again. Will send one or two for your comments. This class seems quite interested.

We commend the use of Model stories, articles, poems in this way. Do as Miss Hall has and select excellent models (from poor ones, students can only learn to write poorly). Then, use the model as bones on which the student builds up the flesh of a new story or poem, thus making it his own. The truth is that story patterns are not numerous. We were all born too late to write anything entirely original. "The Thirteen Dramatic Situations," is the title of one book, "Ten Heroes" is another and both books organize all the basic plots in the world under these few patterns. Instead of trying for originality in plot or pattern, then, let's try for honesty, insight, and charm in presentation.

GETTING ALL YOU CAN FROM THE PROJECT DIRECTOR & CONSULTANTS

No set pattern for working in schools has developed during the first year of this writing project. The methods used have been purposely experimental and adapted to found conditions.

In one school, we worked largely in personal conferences with student writers. This is good as far as it goes, but it leaves undone much of the training of teachers. Unless teachers get all they can, the project has no lasting continuity. We may be able to help a few individual students, but it must be up to the teachers in local schools to carry on from year to year.

The project director can read and write comments on student papers until 3 A. M. night after night, but unless the teacher studies those comments, he or she will not learn to give this kind of help on the next student paper. It would be comforting to believe that a student need be shown only once, but does he learn basic techniques (applicable on future manuscripts) in one fast lesson? Believe me, learning to write well is not that easy, but some participating teachers are learning rapidly how to help by reacting in writing throughout student manuscripts.

Demonstration teaching as a method of training teachers can succeed only when the teacher stays in the class and alert for ideas, not when the teacher assumes that the class is covered and he or she can, at last, take a long coffee break or get caught-up on last week's grading.

The open, eager, generous response to this project by teaching and administrative staffs has been most gratifying. They have met after school and after hours, on Saturdays, on Sundays, and have given parties in order to talk about writing for Indian and Eskimo students. Anyone who dares think that BIA teachers are tour-of-duty drudges or that they do not have the welfare of their students at heart should have tagged along on our school visits through the first year of this project.

The demonstration technique (following always some days of observation) worked most effectively, perhaps, at Chilocco Indian School. Dr. Wall, Mr. Winston, Mr. Wallace, Mrs. Leola Taylor, and Mrs. Pearl Goodbear devised a schedule for demonstrations that allowed the project director and permanent consultant to teach all English classes at least once. All English teachers and some of the administrators sat in on all these sessions, taking notes, for three full days. We were provided a homelike private office and students were made available for individual conferences. The result, an intensive week's workshop in creative writing with all English teachers present for all demonstrations and all students participating in one or more classes. In addition, those students interested in writing were given an opportunity for conferences with the visiting professionals.

This plan obviously required expert planning and some very creative adapting. It may not be feasible in other schools, but it did allow more complete coverage than any other plan we have followed. Whatever plan is feasible in your situation, you are expected to work the project director and consultants hard. They expect their visits to be full and strenuous. They also expect to hear from you and your students between school visits.

It is our plan to publish a monthly newsletter in the future, particularly to serve as a teacher exchange of ideas.

This will be helpful as you participate by sharing your good teaching ideas, your student writings (either good or poor) on which we can write suggestions and comments, your successful or flop assignments, and by asking us your difficult questions.

XII

CAPSULE LESSONS IN WRITING

Learning to write is a lifetime endeavor as any author will tell you. We make no pretensions toward teaching everything in this manual, nor in the three or four years during which we may be able to work with one student.

Teacher and student should seek out and read a few of the many books available on creative writing. We would urge you to buy at least one copy of THE ELEMENTS OF STYLE by William Strunk, Jr. & E. B. White (Macmillan Paperbacks, No. 107, 95¢). Here is most of what you can learn about style from a book. The rest comes from practice and from living. A personal style derives from the writer's personality.

If possible, subscribe to READ MAGAZINE, American Education Publications, Education Center, Columbus, Ohio 43216 (70¢ per semester per student, for 10 or more); and to SCOPE, Scholastic Scope, 902 Sylvan Avenue, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey 07632 (90¢ per semester each for 5 or more).

In order to have various reminders at students' fingertips in brief, rememberable form, we suggest that you mimeograph sheets such as those that follow. The use of different colored paper for each unit seems to help students remember where to look for the reminders they need at a given moment of drafting or revising and polishing.

As you and your students read and discover techniques by writing, you may wish to add other sheets to your notebooks. If so, we hope you will share these with the project director to be included in newsletters for all participating schools.

Some teachers find it useful to ask students to underscore using a different color for each, the different forms of discourse in magazine stories and articles. A piece of writing, so marked, shows at a glance how its author worked. In any case, these reminder sheets are useful for students to have before them as they write.

NARRATIVE: telling quickly, usually in past tense, what has happened.

Use: to connect scenes, make time and place transitions, to give information necessary to the understanding of the story, but not so important that it should be emphasized.

Remember:

Narrative saves space. Select carefully where you use it and it will help you cut stories that run too long.

Weakness:

The reader creates for himself no precise image and, therefore, is inclined not to believe you.

Color me BLUE

DIALOGUE: conversation between characters in a story.

Use:
to reveal character and motives of the speaker and of other actors in the story.
to carry the story forward.
to show emotion — tone of voice, inflection, etc.
to keep individual characters immediately recognizable — tags of speech.
to top off the action — the crest of the wave, not the whole wave.
to emphasize.

Remember:

A character thinks, then acts, and speaks last.

Weakness:

Dialogue is slow, it requires too much space, and it may tempt author to overuse and to get sidetracked from his story.

Color me BLACK

DRAMATIC ACTION
& PANTOMIME: the Scene, blow-by-blow account.

Use: to present all story developments on which much depends.
to attract reader at beginning of story or article.
for reality — to show reader a live person acting before his eyes (ears, nose, skin, and tongue).

Remember:
Scenes are the building blocks from which stories are constructed.

Weakness:
You can't tell all that happens in a Scene — giving Time, Place, Meeting, Purpose, Encounter, Final Act, and Sequel — as quickly as it can really happen.
Slows your story.
Reader may become impatient, may not want to know all that much about it.

Color me RED

DESCRIPTION: presenting through the five senses.

Use: to call attention to the qualities of things, not their names or labels.
to make story believable to your reader.
to characterize — a person's appearance, the way he does things, affects our judgment of him and also affects his character.
for crossing thin spots in the story — call attention to sensory impression to divert your reader from thinking and wondering whether you are putting something over on him.
to create glamour, atmosphere, glitter — make things brighter and larger than in real life.
to transport reader into the world of imagination (see "Through the Looking Glass").
to indicate time and place transitions.

DESCRIPTION (continued)

Remember:

A reader will not believe anything you tell him. He will believe anything you show him. Seeing is believing. So are smelling, tasting, feeling, and hearing.

Dynamic description is more interesting than Static. Describe in this order: size, then shape, then move in close and show details — longshot, medium close, then closeup.

Weakness:

Tempts writer into using too many adjectives and, horror of horrors, adverbs.

Color me GREEN

EXPOSITION: a statement of facts or an explanation.

Use:
- to compress.
- to summarize.
- in the fifth step of Scenes.

Remember:

Readers are from Missouri. They will not believe anything you tell them. They must be shown, or else they must be entertained while being told.

The liveliest form of Exposition is EPIGRAM, but epigrams are hard to come by. They must be witty or clever and must seem spontaneous.

Weakness:

Exposition says to the reader, "Stop and think!" This is dangerous. Stopping is the antithesis of movement and movement — getting on with the story — is the basic principle of prose writing.

Color me YELLOW

SCENE OUTLINE

I. MEETING:

  A. Time

  B. Place

II. PURPOSE — preferably Cross-Purposes

III. ENCOUNTER:

  A. The Appeal to Reason
    1. Give information
    2. Get information
    3. Argue

  B. The Appeal to Emotion
    1. Push - impress, pull rank
    2. Pull - persuade
    (God, Mother, Flag)

  C. The Appeal to Force - fists, guns

IV. FINAL ACT: The person with the purpose
  A. Wins,
  B. Loses, or
  C. Quits

V. SEQUEL:
  A. New State of Mind
  B. New State of Affairs
  C. Link or Coupling Pin to next Scene

NOTE: Remember CAUSE & EFFECT!

FIGURES OF SPEECH

Figures are not mere whipped cream on your writing. They are fillet mignon, rich in muscle-building protein and oh-so-delicious! They are image-makers. They involve your reader's imagination, cause him to react emotionally, and thus help him to live more fully. Your reader will remember you and love you for your really good, really original figures of speech. (Remember, he's heard all the old ones and is apt to turn you off before you finish those.) Fresh figures are fun to imagine and fun to read. For your reader, they are more than fun. They are the lasso with which you catch and hold him and tie him in emotional knots.

SIMILE - a comparison of one thing with another. Not all comparisons are similes, however. The things compared are essentially different except for one or two qualities. Words: "like," "as . . . as," and "so . . . as."

METAPHOR - says one thing is another which, literally, it isn't. A Simile claims resemblance; Metaphor claims identity.

PERSONIFICATION - giving to an inanimate object or force of nature human attributes, emotions, or powers. Our innate interest in people can be transferred to anything by describing it as a person and giving it human characteristics.

SARCASM - the literal meaning of the words is exactly opposite from the meaning you intend to convey. Most useful in dialogue for characterizing your villain.

IRONY - like Sarcasm, the implication is the opposite of the literal meaning of the words. Sarcasm is for villains; Irony is for heroes. Sarcasm is biting, sharp, bitter; Irony is gentle and often witty.

FIGURES OF SPEECH

(continued)

METONYMY - putting one word in place of another. Valuable for its brevity, pungency, and image-making effect. Example: The next moment there was a roaring, mane-shaking lion in the room. "Father!" implored Ann, "Calm yourself. Remember your blood pressure!"

HYPERBOLE - excessive exaggeration, not literally true but often giving a truer impression than the truth could.

PARADOX - a statement that is contradictory or even nonsense, if taken at face value, but with deeper meaning that is readily apparent. Not for lazy writers.

ONOMATOPOEIA - fitting the sound of the word to its meaning. Example: Her scolding words clacked and clattered in my ear.

WAYS OF PRESENTING CHARACTER

A. DIRECT - a character may reveal himself through

1. Action
2. Speech
3. Effect on others
4. Effect of others on him

B. INDIRECT - the author reveals characters through

1. Exposition - explaining traits and motives
2. Description (dynamic in preference to static)
3. Psychological analysis
4. Quoting what other characters say about them

CHARACTER FUNDAMENTALS

A. TRAITS

1. Human
2. Typical
3. Social or moral
4. Individual

B. TAGS OF IDENTIFICATION

1. Appearance
2. Gesture or mannerism
3. Speech
4. Habit of mind

C. ABILITY or CAPACITY

D. TOOL or WEAPON

SHORT POEM PATTERNS

HAIKU - 3 lines, 17 syllables: line 1, 5 syllables
line 2, 7 syllables
line 3, 5 syllables

Simplicity, suggestion
Closely related to the world of nature
Usually mentions or suggests the seasons
Usually employs no rhyme
Usually in present tense
Presents a clear sensory image
Awakens an emotion
Points reader toward some insight about life

EPITAPH - a short poem about a person to be inscribed on his tomb, or a playful imitation of such lines. May extol faults or virtues.

See: COMIC EPITAPHS, gathered and published by the Peter Pauper Press (Mount Vernon, New York, $1.25).

TANKA - 5 lines, 31 syllables: lines 1 & 3 - 5 syllables
lines 2, 4 & 5 - 7 syllables

Closely related to Haiku in content - a nature poem

LIMERICK - usually humorous or nonsense verse
5 lines: lines 1, 2 & 5, long
lines 3 & 4, short

Rhyme: aabba

There was a young lady of Lynn
Who was so excessively thin
That when she essayed
To drink lemonade
She slipped through the straw and fell in.
(anonymous)

Typical beginning: There was a ___ ___ of ______.

SHORT POEM PATTERNS (continued)

CINQUAIN - a form invented by Adelaide Crapsey

5 lines, 22 syllables (but syllable count not fixed)

lines 1 & 5, 2 syllables - noun subject
line 2, 4 syllables - 2 adjectives
line 3, 6 syllables - 3 verbs, usually "ing"
line 4, 8 syllables - a statement about subject; an insight statement
line 5, 2 syllables - repeated subject or a synonym or symbol for the subject of line 1

CLERIHEW - a character form of poem invented by Edmund Clerihew Bentley

Uses the character's name in line 1
4 lines in 2 couplets, rhymed aa, bb
and the name provides one of the rhymes

PANTOUM - from Malaya and a good exercise, particularly for learning the technique of overlapping paragraphs as a means of keeping a reader reading. Also illustrates the effectiveness of tying the end to the beginning which gives form to a work of art.

A series of quatrains, lines 2 & 4 of each are repeated as lines 1 & 3 in the following quatrain. No fixed number of quatrains, but lines 2 & 4 of the last one should be reversed.

Morn and noon and night,
    Here I lie in the ground;
No faintest glimmer of light,
    No lightest whisper of sound.

SHORT POEM PATTERNS (continued)

Here I lie in the ground;
The worms glide out and in;
No lightest whisper of sound
After a lifelong din.

The worms glide out and in;
They are fruitful and multiply;
After a lifelong din
I watch them quietly . . .

and the last line with its reversal:

Blind as a mole or bat,
No faintest glimmer of light,

And wearing a shovel hat,
Morning and noon and night.

(From "Monologue from Beyond the Tomb" - Anonymous. Entire poem quoted in Babette Deutsch, Poetry Handbook, Grosset's Universal Library, $1.50)

Every writer must become his own judge and jury.

YARDSTICK FOR REVISING POETRY

First Draft - Second Draft - Third Draft - Fourth Draft - - -

1. Does this poem have an emotional impact?
2. Is it the emotion I intended?
3. Is every word essential? (If not, cut those that carry no emotion, those that a reader can be depended on to supply for himself, those that disrupt the mood.)
4. Have I chosen the best form for this particular poem?
5. Do my key words carry the right connotation?
6. Does the poem make a single, unified impression?
7. Does it have design — does the beginning predict the end?
8. Do pace and tone feel right? Is it unified by a single mood?
9. Did I settle for the first words I thought of, or can I find words with more precise meaning, more fitting emotional impact, more appropriate sound and rhythm?
10. Have I placed words I want to emphasize at the beginning or end of a line, giving them a strong chance to make their impression?
11. Have I said too much — failed to trust my reader's participation?
12. Does this poem sound right when read aloud?

PROSE
PLAN AND PRESENTATION CHECKLIST

1. Does enough depend on my story problem?

2. Obstacles — does enough stand in the way of my character accomplishing his purpose?

3. Does my final complication contain a hidden solution?

4. Am I saying something that I honestly believe to be true? Does this story offer the reader an observation or conclusion about life that I myself have reached through my own experience?

5. Beginning — have I quickly brought to life my characters and their problems for the story?

6. Middle — does everything move toward solving the story problem, but still not succeed?

7. End — are all loose ends tied off? Will it leave the reader feeling satisfied?

8. Scenes — do they contain all 5 steps? Do I use cross-purpose? Are my sequels clear?

9. Transitions — are my changes in time and place clear?

10. Point of view — have I stayed within one character, looking at and telling the story through his eyes? If not, are my changes in point of view intentional or by accident? If intentional, have I prepared my reader for the shift?

11. Unity — is this one story or three?

12. Cutting — have I developed into Scenes parts of the story that don't require that much space?

13. Do my characters seem like real people? If not, see "Ways of Presenting Character" to see whether I have employed these to the best advantage.

14. Style — have I used figures of speech, sense impression, too many adjectives, any adverbs that I can do without, specific nouns, strong action verbs?

15. Description — have I stopped my story for static descriptions, or have I described dynamically while getting on with the story?

KNOW YOUR MATERIAL

One reason we fail to get along with different peoples is that we don't know each other. Indian and Eskimo students can further understanding and the causes of their own people by helping others get acquainted with their grandmothers, grandfathers, uncles, mothers — with representatives of their culture and ethnic background. In fact, poems and character stories about family members are among the best pieces of writing our students have produced. One problem always threatens to defeat us in this area — students don't know their friends and relatives well enough.

Interviewing is a rather formal label for visiting, but visiting for our purposes should follow a plan. One delightful by-product of writing is to be found in the heightened mutual respect that results from a student honestly wanting to know what members of his family or tribe can tell him about their own experience. This is a real closer-upper of the generation and culture gap, so everybody benefits.

When INTERVIEWING, be sure you get what you go after. To do this, GO WITH A PLAN and TAKE NOTES, or else take a mighty good memory.

Note-taking can be distracting and even frightening to the person being interviewed. It is usually possible to remember (if you make a point of having your senses turned on during the interview) in great detail for a little while. As soon as the interview is over, find a quiet place and write fast, in the Here & Now manner.

During the interview:

EXAMINE POSSESSIONS

Possessions reveal taste, social status, and character. For example: A Navajo who digs up and saves an ancient piece of pueblo pottery that he finds while herding sheep, reveals that he is not especially superstitious. If he takes the pot home and sets it in a prominent place, we can assume that he is proud of his find, or pleased by its line and color. He has an eye for beauty and pride in the history of his land. If he takes it home and hides it, perhaps he is showing his regard for someone else in his family who might cringe and call it "a devil bowl."

ASK QUESTIONS & LISTEN:

to remembrances — things that stick in people's minds, even though trivial, usually have human-interest and are, therefore, valuable to a writer.

to anecdotes, legends, beliefs, customs, feelings, attitudes, desires.

OBSERVE DETAILS of the person being interviewed and of others.

Details of appearance that set each one apart — a wart on his left ear, a tick in her right eye, an inverted curve in her eyebrow, fat or skinny, out-size feet, hairy ears, or whatever.

Speech:

Manner of speaking — quick, jerky, used big words, mistakes in grammar, sarcastic, too soft to be heard, bombastic . . .

By-words and/or favorite sayings.

Habit of mind or personal outlook on life — optimistic, paranoic, selfish, open-handed, pessimistic, miserly, egotistic . . .

Movements — walks with a limp, twiddles his thumbs, gulps his food, walks erect or stooped, sits on his neck, kicks off shoes at every opportunity.

OBSERVE DETAILS of the Setting

The character of the land — distant views, near views, the immediate vicinity (neat or messy?), livestock, garden, corral, woodpile, means of transportation, etc.

The home — outside, inside. Does it reveal ingenuity or bursts of extravagance, good or poor taste, what else?

It pays to observe a few

LAWS OF WRITING,

not because Congress has passed them, but because READERS are so made that they can understand your meaning and/or experience the emotional response that you intend only when they are approached in certain ways. These ways have been discovered by studying people, not by studying writing. They were first discovered by the early Greeks. It is a little late for us to change human response patterns so, instead, let's use them to our advantage in these ways:

1. Write about people, things, and facts — in that order. Remember, people are interested in people!
2. Write as you talk. Use contractions.
3. Write in the first person. Change it to third person later, if you wish.
4. Quote exactly what was said. To do this, listen. Dialogue must sound like "talk," not like "writing."
5. Put yourself in the reader's shoes. Don't hurt his his feelings. Don't over- or underestimate him.
6. Don't generalize. Write a blow-by-blow account. Give your reader sensory details and he will build his own experience.
7. Select what you tell according to the effect you want to have on your reader. Don't tell him anything he doesn't need to know.
8. Plan a beginning, body, and end.
9. Go from the rule to the exception, from the familiar to the new, from size to shape to details of appearance.

10. Use the active voice and a personal subject.

11. Prefer verbs, then nouns, then adjectives when necessary. Adverbs are dirty words to be used only under extreme provocation.

12. Keep your sentences short. Keep your paragraphs short. Keep your writing easy to read and interesting to look at.

13. Remember cause-and-effect. One sentence causes the next, one paragraph causes and overlaps the next. The beginning causes the end. Character causes the solution of the story problem.